

Kesa,puttiya Sutta

The Discourse to the Kesa,puttiyas

Or, **Kālāma Sutta**, the Discourse to the Kālāmas

[Doubt, moral virtue, and spiritual assurance]

(Aṅguttara Nikāya 3.65/1:188-193)

Translated with notes by Piya Tan ©2004, 2006

*To the Nanyang Technological University Buddhist Society,
who requested this new translation, Dec 2006.*

[**Note prefixes:** “§” before a number refers to passages in the Sutta itself. “Intro” refers to an Introduction section.” “Comy” here usually refers to the Commentarial Notes at the end of this chapter. A parenthesized cross-reference without a prefix, eg [8], refers to the section in the same chapter.]

Sutta Synopsis

§§1-2	1 The Kālāmas approach the Buddha.
§§3-14	2 Moral worth of statements.
§§15a	3 The divine abodes.
§§15b-16	4 The four self-assurances.
§17	5 The Kālāmas’ exultation.
§18	6 The Kālāmas go for refuge.

1 The 10 doubtful points

1.1 MISINTERPRETATION OF THE SUTTA. The Kesa,puttiya Sutta (better known as the Kālāma Sutta) is perhaps the most misquoted and misused Buddhist text. **Soma Thera**, in his translation of the Sutta, promisingly subtitled it as “the Buddha’s Charter of Free Inquiry” (1981). Alongside the Sutta is quoted Śāntarākṣita’s famous statement from **the Tattva,saṅgraha**,

Bhikṣavaḥ [sambuddhau] mat-vaçaḥ grāhyam paṇḍitaiḥ parīkṣya ’iḥ tu na gauravāt iva suvarṇam tāpāt chedāt nikaṣāt

O bhikshus [said the self-awakened one], my word should be accepted by the wise only after investigation, not out of respect (for me)—just as gold (is accepted) only after heating, cutting and rubbing. (Tts ch 26/3588) [6]

The Sutta even made it into the online encyclopaedia, Wikipedia.¹ However, as **Bhikkhu Bodhi** has observed in his essay, “A look at the Kālāma Sutta”:

though the discourse certainly does counter the decrees of dogmatism and blind faith with a vigorous call for free investigation, it is problematic whether the sutta can support all the positions that have been ascribed to it. On the basis of a single passage, quoted out of context, the Buddha has been made out to be a pragmatic empiricist who dismisses all doctrine and faith, and

¹ Accessed 30 Nov 2006 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalama_Sutta.

whose Dhamma is simply a freethinker's kit to truth which invites each one to accept and reject whatever he likes. (1988)

That "single passage" that has been misconstrued as a carte blanche for a "self-assembled" Buddhism actually refers to the ten doubtful points (*dasa kaṅkhāniya-t,thāna*),² or unreliable sources of knowledge, or inadequate criteria for truth [§§3, 8, 9, 14]. The Buddha's intention is gradually but clearly and fully revealed as the Sutta unfolds. The Sutta opens with the oft quoted ten "doubtful points":

Come Kālāmas:

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|---|---|
| (1) Do not go ³ by oral tradition [received wisdom] | (<i>mā anussavena</i>). |
| (2) Do not go by lineage [successive tradition] | (<i>mā paramparāya</i>). |
| (3) Do not go by hearsay | (<i>mā iti, kirāya</i>). |
| (4) Do not go by scriptural authority | (<i>mā piṭaka, sampadānena</i>). |
| (5) Do not go by pure reason | (<i>mā takka, hetu[, gāhena]</i>). |
| (6) Do not go by inference [by logic] | (<i>mā naya, hetu[, gāhena]</i>). |
| (7) Do not go by reasoned thought [by specious reasoning] | (<i>mā ākāra, parivitakkena</i>). |
| (8) Do not go by acceptance of [being convinced of]
a view after pondering on it | (<i>mā diṭṭhi, nijjhāna-k, khantiyā</i>). |
| (9) Do not go by (another's) seeming ability | (<i>mā bhavya, rūpatāya</i>). |
| (10) Do not go by the thought, "This monk ⁴ is our
teacher" ["This recluse is respected by us"] | (<i>mā samaṇo no garū ti</i>). |

When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,

'These things are unwholesome. These things are blamable. These things are censured by the wise. These things, when undertaken and practised, bring about harm and suffering.' [3]

—Then Kālāmas, you should abandon them.

This passage, like the Buddha's teachings as recorded in the Pali texts, has its context—that is, a particular audience and situation—and the teaching should be understood in that context.

In none of these passages or anywhere in the Sutta does the Buddha, as often misquoted by proponents of "vague Buddhism," state that his teachings should not be accepted, or that one could shape Buddhism according to one's likes and bias—"rather, he counsels that the words of the wise should be heeded and taken into account when deciding upon the value of a teaching."⁵

1.2 BUDDHIST EPISTEMOLOGY. The Kesa,puttiya Sutta is a classic discourse on Buddhist epistemology, that is, the theory of knowledge, or an investigation into what constitutes valid knowledge and what does not. It is interesting to see here how Buddhist epistemology is different from its Western philosophical counterpart, as **PD Premasiri** notes:

The classical epistemological theories of the West fall into one of two principal traditions, viz, rationalism and empiricism. The consequence of the rationalist-empiricist dichotomy has been that philosophers have attempted to search a single paradigm to which all knowledge could conform.

The rationalist has adhered to the view that knowledge has the nature of a deductive system while empiricists have insisted on the view that the most certain and indubitable knowledge claims are those about our immediate sense data. Both points have led to skepticism with respect to many legitimate areas of human knowledge. The attempt to search for an absolute has also led

² *Kaṅkhāniyaṭṭhāna* (eg Prayudh, *Dictionary of Buddhism* §305, 1985:274) is a formation from the two components in the sentence, *kaṅkhanīye ca pana vo thāne vicikicchā uppannā* (A 65.3/1:189).

³ Comy interprets as *mā gaṇhiṭṭha* or *mā gaṇhittha*, "do not accept (lit, 'take hold of') (a notion)" throughout (AA 2:305).

⁴ *Samana* is usually tr as "ascetic," even "holy man," but here also refers to "nun," or a religious teacher.

⁵ Accessed 30 Nov 2006 from <http://www.answers.com/topic/kalama-sutta>.

to many an elusive metaphysical claim which [has] diverted the human mind from all that is practically relevant and useful.

The admission of the mind in Buddhism as a sixth sense enables it to see reason as a function of the mind and consequently the opposition between sense and reason finds no place in Buddhism. (Premasiri 2006b:172; also 2006a:146 f)

The early Buddhist conception of knowledge is that it has no absolute paradigm, no enduring forms. Knowledge arises not only through the five physical senses, but more importantly, such data are actually interpreted by the sixth sense, the mind, which additionally presents its own sense-data or form of knowledge. Early Buddhist philosophy and psychology do not view reality as being out there, but as being *in here*, that is, *it is how we view the world that creates and sustains our ideas and philosophies, and motivates our actions.* And we face the consequences of such actions.

Early Buddhism sees knowing as a value-laden process, and we create that value. We give things meaning: that is why such ideas as “God” are meaningful (or useful) to some but meaningless (or useless to others) [5.2]. Very often we add on the wrong and negative value. The most basic level of knowing, as such, is *to know the mind*. The mind can be compared to the lens through which we view the world. Very often this lens is smudged by wrong view, coloured by craving, and blurred by ignorance. The lens-cleaning begins with the restraint of body and speech, that is, moral training, which provides a conducive environment for us *to train the mind*.

Both moral training and mental training are the vital bases for clearing the mind totally and finally (albeit gradually) of all defilements. This is the stage when we begin to truly understand how the senses work and how we know things. When this knowledge become holistically systematized, it is called wisdom (*paññā*), and when the knowing is clear and total, it is “full understanding” (*pariññā*), and when it liberates, it is called “direct knowledge” (*aññā*). One then becomes an arhat.

The purpose of life, then, is not merely to know; for knowledge is not the end, but the means. When knowledge is valued for itself, it becomes itself a view (*diṭṭhi*), a fetter (*saṃyojanā*) [Comy 3a(4)2]. When one begins to understand how one knows, then one sees only mental constructs. As such, one has to see beyond knowing and knowledge, and the Kesa,puttiya Sutta is an important discourse on how to do this. [4.1]

2 Sutta summary

The Kālāmas are the inhabitants of the town of **Kesa,putta** which, says the Commentary, is located at the edge of a forest. Various groups of wanderers would stop there to spend the night before crossing the forest (or on emerging from the forest). During their stay, they would give talks to the Kālāmas, so that they are exposed to a wide range of religious and philosophical ideas (AA 2:305). Understandably, such a bewildering range of views causes doubt and perplexity in the minds of the Kālāmas.

From the Sutta [§1], we can surmise that the Buddha’s fame precedes him, and (according to the Commentary) the Kālāmas eagerly welcome him, and “approached him, holding medicines such as ghee and fresh butter, and the eight kinds of drinks.”⁶ Having approached the Buddha, they declare their predicament to the Buddha so that he might dispel them [§2]. The Buddha immediately consoles them by saying that their doubt is justified, and goes on to list the ten doubtful sources of knowledge or criteria for

⁶ *Sappi,nava,nīt’ādi,bhesajjāni c’eva aṭṭha,vidha,pānakāni ca gāhāpetvā upasaṅkamim̐su* (AA 2:304). **Vinaya** allows the following 8 kinds of drink (even outside the permitted meal hours), viz: (1) mango drink, rose-apple drink, coconut milk, banana drink, honey drink, grape drink, lotus-root drink, and berry drink (*amba,pānaṃ jambū,-pānaṃ coca,pānaṃ moca,pānaṃ madhu,pānaṃ muddhika,pānaṃ sālūka,pānaṃ pharusaka,pānaṃ*, V 1:246). **Mahā Niddesa** mentions this set and also another set of 8: (2) *kosamba* fruit drink, *kola* jujube drink, *badara* jujube drink, ghee, oil, congee, fresh milk, essence drink (*kosamba,pānaṃ kola,pānaṃ badara,pānaṃ ghata,pānaṃ tela,pānaṃ yāgu,pānaṃ payo,pānaṃ rasa,pānaṃ*, Nm 372). Set (1) is canonical, but set (2) is probably late, and may need the consensus of the Sangha or Vinaya master for approval for consumption outside the permitted time.

truth that are doubtful [1, §3]. He admonishes them to examine whether such statements were morally wholesome or unwholesome, and to reject them if they are unwholesome.⁷

It is obvious here that the Kālāmas, the Buddha's audience, have some level of ethical sensibility: after all, they have themselves approached the Buddha requesting his admonition. Clearly, such an advice to judge things for oneself would not work if the listener lacks ethical integrity or moral sense. But this is only the start of the admonition.

The Buddha continues by questioning the Kālāmas if they understood and reject the three unwholesome roots that are the bases for immoral acts because they are blamable and self-harming [§§4-7]. Having understood these points, the Buddha declares that it is for this reason that he has pointed out the ten doubtful points [§8].

Then he questions them if they understand and cultivate the three wholesome roots that are the bases for moral acts because these are "praised by the wise" (that is, the arhats) and are beneficial [§§8-13]. When the Kālāmas have understood these points, the Buddha declares that it is for this reason that he has pointed out the ten doubtful points [§14].

The Buddha next explains the four divine abodes, that a "noble disciple, free from covetousness, without ill will, unconfused, fully aware, mindful," dwells pervading the world with loving-kindness, with compassion, with altruistic joy, and with equanimity [§§15-16]. Thus with a mind that is purified, free of hate and malice, he enjoys right here in this life these four "self-assurances" (*assāsa*) [§17]:

If there is an afterlife and karmic result,	then he will undergo a good rebirth.
Or, if there is none,	he still lives happily right here in this life.
Or, if evil results befall an evil-doer,	then no evil will befall him.
Or, if evil results do not befall an evil-doer,	he is purified anyway.

[Comy 15b-16]

The Kālāmas express their appreciation of the Buddha's discourse and go for refuge to the Three Jewels [§18].

A remarkable feature of the Kesa,puttiya Sutta is the comprehensive manner in which it covers the range of human knowledge and experience, that is, the cognitive, the conative, the affective and the spiritual. The cognitive aspect of the Sutta is covered by the Buddha's reassuring that the Kālāmas have the right to doubt in things doubtful and exhorting them on the ten doubtful points. The conative side of the Sutta is not merely about personal will, but that of moral will, that good is possible, and is interlinked with our affective qualities, brought to spiritual heights by the four divine abodes. Above all, this Sutta is remarkable in not being an intellectual or academic exercise but a study in practical wisdom, one that leads to spiritual liberation.

3 Significance of the Sutta

3.1 THE KĀLĀMAS' PREDISPOSITION. Bodhi, in his essay on "A look at the Kālāma Sutta," makes this helpful observation:

Partly in reaction to dogmatic religion, partly in subservience to the reigning paradigm of objective scientific knowledge, it has become fashionable to hold, by appeal to the Kālāma Sutta, that the Buddha's teaching dispenses with faith and formulated doctrine and asks us to accept only what we can personally verify. This interpretation of the sutta, however, forgets that the advice the Buddha gave the Kalamas was contingent upon the understanding that they were not yet prepared to place faith in him and his doctrine; it also forgets that the sutta omits, for that very reason, all mention of right view and of the entire perspective that opens up when right view is acquired. It offers instead the most reasonable counsel on wholesome living possible when the issue of ultimate beliefs has been put into brackets. (Bodhi 1988:2 f)

⁷ **Bhaddiya S** (A 4.193/2:190-194) = SD 35.10 contains the same 10 doubtful points & the section on the roots (§§3b-15a). Comy says that at the end of the discourse, Bhaddiya becomes a stream-winner. (AA 3:173)

Now let us examine from internal evidence (from the Sutta itself) whether it actually admonishes us to dismiss all doctrine and faith, and whether it invites us to accept or reject whatever we like in a teaching (as some proponents of vague Buddhism hold). Now, as Bodhi has observed, it should be noted that at the start of the discourse, the Kālāmas are *not* followers of the Buddha. They have approached him simply for some sort of spiritual counselling as troubled clients (especially a non-practitioner) would approach a monk or nun today for spiritual help. In fact, there is no hint at all that the Kālāmas are seeking how to awaken, or even to be practitioners. Their question is almost of an intellectual nature:

“Bhante, there are some recluses and brahmins who come to Kesa,putta. They expound and explain their own doctrines, but attack, revile, despise and reject the doctrines of others.

And then some recluses and brahmins come to Kesa,putta and they, too, expound and explain their own doctrines, but attack, revile, despise and reject the doctrines of others.

Bhante, we are uncertain and in doubt: Which of these good recluses speak truth and which speak falsehood?” [§2]

However, despite their desperation (with a broad hint of annoyance and perplexity), they will be getting more than they have hoped for. This is clearly because of the Buddha’s “good report” (that is, charisma) that has preceded him, and the Kālāmas’ own readiness to listen. Also significant is the fact that the Buddha does not give them a progressive talk or gradual discourse, which would be the rule if they were ready for spiritual training leading to sainthood. **The progressive talk** (*ānupubbī,kathā*) stock passage runs thus:

Then the Blessed One gave him a progressive talk—that is to say, he spoke on giving (*dāna*), on moral virtue (*sīla*) and on the heavens (*sagga*). He explained the danger, the vanity and the disadvantages of sensual pleasures (*kām’ādīnava*), and the advantages of renunciation (*nekkham-m’ānisaṃsa*). When the Blessed One perceived that the listener’s mind was prepared, pliant, free from obstacles, elevated and lucid, then he explained to him the teaching peculiar to the Buddhas (*buddhānaṃ sāmukkaṃsikaṃ desanā*), that is to say, suffering (*dukkha*), its arising, its cessation, and the path. (V 1:15; D 1:148; A 3:184 etc) See SD 9(10d)

There is a very good reason why the progressive talk is not given to the Kālāmas here: they have not been established in faith towards the Three Jewels. We are not even sure if they are seeking any spiritual truth. The best we can say is that they are simply seeking clarification to judge who amongst the various teachers and speakers are right and who are wrong. Perhaps, some of them might even remain perplexed despite the Buddha’s clarification. However, we are quite certain there are many of those who truly benefited from the Buddha’s admonition.

Another important conclusion we safely surmise of the Kālāmas is that they do have some sort of moral integrity. This is clear from their statement, “It is good to see such arhats” [§1], from the way most of them respectfully approached the Buddha,⁸ and from the sincerity of their question. Although still confused by the various conflicting claims they have referred to, they apparently have a good sense of moral virtue. After all, they have taken the trouble to seek the Buddha’s counsel.

3.2 THREEFOLD CATEGORIZATION OF THE TEN POINTS. Briefly stated, we can say that the Buddha admonishes that no idea or teaching should be accepted simply on the basis of tradition, of personal authority, or of reason, and the ten doubtful positions can be thus categorized in the following way:⁹

⁸ It is true that “[s]ome kept silent and sat down at one side,” and such people are even more common today in a Buddhist gathering, even before wise and accomplished teachers. But they are apparently and generally in the negligible minority in the Buddha’s case.

⁹ See Bodhi 2005:431 ch III n4. These 10 doubtful points are discussed in some detail in the Commentarial Notes below.

By way of tradition ¹⁰	By way of reasoning ¹¹	By way of authority ¹²
1 oral tradition or received wisdom (<i>anussava</i>);	5 pure reason (<i>takka,hetu</i>);	9 another's seeming ability (<i>bhavya,rūpatā</i>);
2 lineage or successive tradition (<i>paramparā</i>);	6 inference [logic] (<i>naya,hetu</i>);	10 the thought, "This recluse is our teacher," or "This recluse is respected by us." (<i>mā samaṇo no garū ti</i>).
3 hearsay (<i>iti,kira</i>);	7 reasoned thought or specious reasoning (<i>ākāra,parivītakka</i>);	
4 scriptural authority (<i>piṭaka,-sampadā</i>);	8 acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it (<i>diṭṭhi,-nījjhāna-k,khantiyā</i>).	

Table 3.2 The threefold categorization of the ten doubtful points

This twofold categorization of the ten doubtful points is based on an important principle, that of the three kinds of wisdom, namely, the wisdom through hearing (*suta,mayā paññā*), the wisdom through thinking (*cinta,mayā paññā*), and the wisdom through mental cultivation (*bhāvanā,mayā paññā*). (D 3:219; Vbh 324) [Comy 1c]. In fact, we find the same classifying principle being used in **the Saṅgārava Sutta** (M 100), where the Buddha speaks of three kinds of teachers in his own time, that is,

- (1) **The traditionalists** (*anussavikā*), who, on the basis of oral tradition, proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now. The traditionalists derive their knowledge and claims wholly from divine revelation, scriptural tradition and interpretations based on it. Prominent amongst the traditionalists are the brahmins who upheld the authority of the Vedas.

Their knowledge or wisdom is based almost exclusively on hearing (*suta,mayā paññā*). Under this category would be included all the six doubtful points (nos 1-4, 9-10) "by way of authority" as listed in Table 3.2.

- (2) **The rationalists and speculators [metaphysicians]** (*takkī vīmaṃsī*), who, entirely on the basis of mere faith. Using reasoning and speculating to reinforce that faith, they proclaim their dogmas and ideas. The rationalists derive their knowledge and claims through reasoning and speculations without any claim to extrasensory perception. The speculators of the early Upaniṣads, the skeptics, the materialists and most of the Ājīvakas come under this class.

Their knowledge is mostly that of the wisdom through thinking and reasoning (*cinta,mayā paññā*). Under this category would be included all the six doubtful points (nos 6-8) "through reasoning" as listed in Table 3.2.

- (3) **The experientialists**, who, in things not heard before, having directly known the Dharma for themselves (*sāmaṃ yeva dhammaṃ abhiññāya*),¹³ proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now. The experientialists depend on direct personal knowledge and experience, including extrasensory perception on the basis of which their theories are founded. Many of the thinkers of the middle and late Upaniṣads, some of the Ājīvakas and Jains can be put in this class. The materialists, as empiricists (those who advocate reality as known only through personal expe-

¹⁰ This category has been discussed at length by Jayatilke 1963:169-200 (in terms of Western philosophy).

¹¹ This category has been discussed at length by Jayatilke 1963:205-276 (in terms of Western philosophy).

¹² This category has been discussed at length by Jayatilke 1963:200-204 (in terms of Western philosophy).

¹³ This phrase, notes Bodhi, "emphasizes direct personal realization as the foundation for promulgating a holy life." (M:ÑB 1304 920).

rience, that is, the senses), may also be classed here, “if not for the fact that they denied the validity of claims to extrasensory perception.”¹⁴ The Buddha declares himself to be a teacher in this category. Their knowledge or wisdom is based on mental cultivation (*bhāvanā, mayā paññā*). (M 100.7/2:211) = SD 10.9¹⁵

3.3 AVOIDING THE POWER MODE. Firstly, the Buddha basically advises the Kālāmas not to blindly accept any teaching on account of tradition or of authority, that is, not to fall into the “power mode.”

The term *tradition*, according to **Bodhi**,¹⁶ refers to the first four criteria. Of these

- (1) “oral tradition” (*anussava*) refers to the Vedic tradition, which according to the brahmins, originated with the primal being and came down orally through successive generations.
- (2) “Lineage” (*paramparā*) refers to an unbroken succession of teachings or teachers.
- (3) “Hearsay” (*iti, kirā*) refers to popular opinion or general consensus.
- (4) “Scriptural authority” (*piṭaka, sampadā*) regarding religious texts as being infallible.

A teaching should not be regarded as being true or beneficial simply on the **authority** of *revelations, testimonies, and received wisdoms, of hereditary lineages (religious and otherwise), of hearsay (including the media and gossip), scripture, expertise (including academic qualification and charisma), or respectability (including status and title)*. To rely on authority in intellectual and spiritual matters (especially the latter) is to surrender one’s mind to an external agency. Spiritual liberation, on the other hand, can only be obtained through a direct knowledge of reality, even if the means to do so is found externally (say, through another’s “voice” or admonition) [Intro 5.4].

The power mode is based on unequal relationships, or more technically, a relationship based on conceit, that those perceived as lower should look up to those higher. The locus of power is externalized: there is a dependence on an external authority that controls one’s thoughts and behaviour. On the contrary, the spiritual relationship entails no measuring or status, like the waters of the rivers merging into the great ocean, individuals become freely linked in a spiritual community. This aspect of the Buddha’s admonition becomes especially significant in connection with his instructions on the cultivation of the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) [§15].

3.4 THE PRIMACY OF FEELING. Secondly, one should not accept any teaching on the basis of reasoning alone, that is, in terms of “head aspect.” A teaching should not be regarded as being true or beneficial simply on the basis of **reasoning**, that is, through *pure logic, inference, reasoned thought (such as theories), or bias (philosophical or otherwise)*. [4]

Reasoning only works (if they do) in a controlled situation of conventional premises. Most of living experiences are motivated by and result from *feelings*. That the teaching on the divine abodes should follow here is very significant, as it points to the supremacy of a right understanding of feelings as the basis for spiritual life that ripens in awakening.

The Brahma, jāla Sutta (D 1) is very clear on this point, declaring that all the 62 grounds for wrong view are based on feeling:

Therein, bhikshus, what those recluses and brahmins who are speculators about the past, who are speculators about the future, who are speculators about both the past and future, who hold various dogmatic views about both the past and future, assert on sixty-two grounds their dogmatic notions—that is only the feeling of those who know not, who see not, merely the agitation and vacillation of those overcome by craving. (D 1.117/1:14) = SD 25.2

¹⁴ Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:170.

¹⁵ See Intro (2).

¹⁶ **Bodhi** gives a threefold classification of the doubtful points [1]: “reverence for tradition,” comprising points (1-4); “four types of reasoning,” comprising (5-6); and “two types of personal authority,” comprising (7-10). (2005:431 ch III n4). His main points have been incorporated here. For further discussion, see under Commentary in this chapter. These 10 points are also given a detailed philosophical analysis in **Jayatilleke** 1963:175-205, 271-75.

Then the Brahma,jāla Sutta goes on to add that for those who assert their dogmatic notions on the 62 grounds for wrong view, “it is impossible that they would experience anything other than contact (that is, sense-experience).”¹⁷ That is to say, all our experiences are sense-based, and have to be understood so.

3.5 MORAL VIRTUE AND MENTAL CULTIVATION. Having said that by way of clearing away the initial doubts and unease of the Kālāmas, the Buddha then turns to more important teachings: those of moral virtue and mental cultivation. By way of a sustained question-and-answer sequence, the Buddha makes sure that his audience is following the trend of his teaching on **moral virtue** (*sīla*). The Kālāmas agree that actions motivated by the three unwholesome roots—greed, hate and delusion—lead one to break the basic moral precepts and to make others to do so. As such, these actions are *blamable (personally unbeneficial), censured by the wise (socially unbeneficial), and bring about bad karmic fruits* [§§3b-8]. All the ten doubtful points are then repeated to emphasize their connection with the misperception and misinterpretation of contact (sense-experiences) and feeling [§9a].

On the other hand, actions motivated by the three wholesome roots—non-greed (charity), non-hate (lovingkindness and compassion), and non-delusion (wisdom)—do not entail the breaking of the basic moral precepts nor making others to do so. As such, these actions are *not blamable (personally beneficial), praised by the wise (socially beneficial), and bring about good karmic fruits* [§§10-14]. This is no mean teaching, as the destruction of the three unwholesome roots leads one to the highest goal, nirvana.

The Kālāmas, having understood and accepted these basic principles of moral virtue, are now ready for mental cultivation, which understandably consists in the four divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*), those qualities conducive to beneficent leadership and community life; that is to say, lovingkindness, compassion, altruistic joy and equanimity. These practices lead to the “breaking of barriers” between self and other, and so greatly helps in the forging of spiritual friendship and a wholesome community.

Finally, the Buddha gives a remarkable teaching, that of the four self-assurances [16]. For those who are not concerned beyond the present life, or who are not prepared for any conviction regarding karma and rebirth, such a way of life ensures at least their present welfare, if not their future lives. The four self-assurances seem to forestall Pascal’s Wager [6], which pales against their compass and compassion. The four self-assurances, in fact, form the theme of **the Apanṇaka Sutta** (M 60).¹⁸

The Sutta happily concludes with the Kālāmas taking refuge in the Three Jewels “for life.” It is highly likely that this stock passage (which often concludes successful transmission of the Dharma) refers to at least the attaining of stream-winning of the refuge-takers. For it is unlikely that one would merely go to the Three Jewels “for life” merely by way of lip-service, that is, only as a ritual. Moreover, faith—evident from the tone of the passage—is a hallmark of the stream-winner.

4 Beyond belief and reason

4.1 HOW WE KNOW THINGS. A very significant characteristic of the Kesa,puttiya Sutta often missed by many, especially the proponents of vague Buddhism, is that the ten doubtful points [1] are closely related to Buddhist epistemology [1.2], that is, how we know things. Let us for a moment ask ourselves what do we really know for ourselves? We can begin by disregarding all those things we know from the books, the mass media (newspapers, radio, TV, the telephone, etc), from the Internet, and also from what people tell us—very little remains that we can truly call *our personal knowledge*.

Indeed, we would discover that our direct first-hand knowledge of things is really very little compared to second- and third-hand information. And our minds are filled with mostly unverified information, very often half-truths and hearsay. *Our lives are run on rumours*. No wonder, we often find ourselves lost and unhappy, or suspect that something is missing from our lives. Thinking, if wisely done, helps us to see through such delusions; otherwise, it is usually speculative, and only worsens the problem.

Understandably, the Buddha rejects popular opinion as a measure of spiritual truth, as it tends to be arbitrary and false, and as such is not helpful in the spiritual task. *The crowd never thinks*; the majority is not always right. Thus, as recorded in **the Cūḷa Saccaka Sutta** (M 35), when Saccaka, debating with the

¹⁷ D 1.143/1:43 = SD 25.2.

¹⁸ M 60/1:400-413 = SD 35.5.

Buddha, invokes popular opinion (*mahatī janatā*)—asserting that *the majority must be right*—to support his notion, the Buddha rebukes him, declaring that popular opinion has nothing to do with the truth of the point in question: “What, Aggivessana, has popular opinion to do with you? Come now, extricate just your own assertion!”¹⁹

The Buddha and the early Buddhists are not interested in philosophical speculation, that is, in discussing what knowledge is or how we know things, although we do find some interesting and helpful passages in this connection (as evident from the Kesa,puttiya Sutta and related discourses). Knowledge is taken merely as a tool for spiritual liberation. The same tools—language and thinking—are also the tools of philosophy. However, while philosophy (“the love for thinking”) takes thinking as a goal in itself, Buddhism takes it only as a step towards spiritual understanding, that is, the love for liberation. Only through the direct experience of mental cultivation can we gain the knowledge leading to spiritual awakening.

4.2 WHAT WE REALLY KNOW. The Saṃyutta Nikāya contains two interesting discourses dealing with this issue of what we really know. They are **the (Musīla) Kosambī Sutta** (S 12.68) and **the Atthi Nu Kho Pariyāya Sutta** (S 35.153), and they speak of the questionable sources of knowledge—namely, faith, personal preference, repeated hearing, specious reasoning, and acceptance of (or being convinced of) a view after pondering on it²⁰—and true personal knowledge (*paccattam eva ñāṇa*). In **the (Musīla) Kosambī Sutta** (S 12.68), the monk Saviṭṭha asks the arhat Musīla whether he (Musīla) directly knows dependent arising, beginning with this question:

Friend Musīla,

apart from faith,

apart from preference,

apart from oral tradition [what is repeatedly heard],

apart from specious reasoning [reasoned thought],

apart from acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it,

does the venerable Musīla have personal knowledge thus: “With birth as condition, there is death-and decay”?²¹ (S 12.68/2:115) = SD 35.8

As an arhat, Musīla, of course, answers in the affirmative. Although he does not wish to declare his arhat-hood, it is clear from his answer that he has direct knowledge of awakening.

A similar question is asked by the Buddha in **the Atthi Nu Kho Pariyāyo Sutta** (S 35.153), whether apart from the five positions—of faith, preference, or repeated hearing [oral tradition], by specious reasoning or reasoned thought, or by acceptance of (or being convinced of) a view after pondering on it—one could declare final knowledge (*aññā*), that is, one’s arhat-hood. The Buddha then goes on to explain how this can be done, thus:

“Here, bhikshus, a monk, having seen a form with the eye, knows when greed, hate and delusion are within, thus: ‘Greed, hate, and delusion are in me.’ He knows when there are no greed, hate and delusion within, thus: ‘Greed, hate and delusion are not in me.’

Since this is so, bhikshus, have these things been understood through faith, through preference, through repeated hearing, through reasoned reflection [by specious reasoning], or through acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it?”

“No, bhante.” ...

¹⁹ Or, “Confine yourself to just your own point,” (*kim hi te Aggivessana mahatī janatā karissati, iṅha tvam sakaṃ yeva vādam nibbetehehi*) (M 35.11/1:230).

²⁰ These five are discussed in detail in Jayatilleke 1963:812-188, 274-276.

²¹ *Aññatr’eva āvuso Musīla saddhāya aññatra ruciyā aññatra amussavā ākāra,parivittakkā aññatra ditthi,nij-jhāna,khantiyā atth’āyasmato Musīlassa paccattam eva ñāṇaṃ jāti,paccayā jarā,marañan ti.*

“This, bhikshus, is the method of exposition by means of which—apart from faith, from preference, from repeated hearing, from specious reasoning, or from acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it—a monk can declare final knowledge, thus:

‘Destroyed is birth. The holy life has been lived. What needs to be done has been done. There is (for me) no more of arising in any state of being.’” (S 35.153.7/4:139) = SD 35.9

The **Saṃyutta Commentary** explains that one person accepts something through faith (*saddhā*) by placing faith in another and accepting what he says as true. Another accepts something through personal preference (*ruci*) when he approves of some thesis by reflecting on it, and then takes it to be true. One accepts through oral tradition (*anussava*) when one thinks, “This has come down from ancient times by oral tradition; so it must be true.” For another, as he thinks, a certain thesis appear valid, and he concludes, “So it is,” and accepts it by reasoned reflection (*ākāra, parivittakka*).²² In the fifth case, as one reflects, a view arises by pondering over some hypothesis: this is acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it (*diṭṭhi, nijjhāna-k, khanti*). (SA 2:403) [Intro 5.1]

4.3 PERSONAL VERIFICATION. The Buddha’s teaching is personally verifiable in this life itself (*sacchikato sayam*, Tha 331; *diṭṭhe dhamme viditvā*, Sn 1053). Book religions, such as Vedism and the modern God-religions, are said to be based on hearsay (*iti, kira*) or tradition (*iti, hīti, ha*). “The Blessed One teaches the holy life that is not based on hearsay or tradition” (A 2:26).²³ Indeed, the Buddha tells Mettagū,

I will expound a teaching that is not based on hearsay or tradition, knowing which, living mindfully, one would here and now transcend the attachment in world. (Sn 1053)²⁴

The **Thera, gāthā** records an elder as having realized “the Dharma that is not based on hearsay or tradition (*dhammo anītiho*)” (Tha 331). The term *anīti, ha* is commonly found in **the Culla Niddesa** (that is, the second part of the Niddesa), an ancient commentary on the Pārāyana Vagga of the Sutta Nipāta (Sn 976-1149). The term is found in three of the dialogues (called “questions,” *pañha*) and one in the conclusion (Anugīti Gāthā),²⁵ and the Culla Niddesa explains *anīti, ha* as follows:

<u>Not tradition</u>	(<i>na itihītiham</i>),
not hearsay	(<i>na iti kirāya</i>),
not lineage	(<i>na paramparāya</i>),
not scriptural authority	(<i>na piṭaka, sampadāya</i>),
not pure reason	(<i>na takka, hetu</i>)
not inference [by logic]	(<i>na naya, hetu</i>)
not reasoned thought [by specious reasoning]	(<i>na ākāra, parivittakkena</i>)
not acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it	(<i>na diṭṭhi, nijjhāna-k, khantiyā</i>):
the Dharma is realized by oneself for oneself, directly verified by oneself	(<i>sāmaṃ sayam abhiññātāṃ atta, paccakkham dhammaṃ</i>). (Nc 49) ²⁶

Omitted are positions (1) “Do not go by oral tradition [received wisdom] (*mā anussavena*),” (9) “Do not go by another’s seeming ability (*mā bhavya, rūpatāya*),” and (10) “Do not go by the thought, ‘This recluse

²² Jayatilleke discusses *ākāra* as meaning “reason.” (1963:274).

²³ *Brahma, cariyam anītiham... adesayi so bhagavā* (A 2:26).

²⁴ *Kittayissāmi te dhammaṃ (Mettagū ti bhagavā) | diṭṭhe dhamme anītiham | yaṃ viditvā sato caraṃ tare loke visattikaṃ*. (Sn 1053)

²⁵ As *anītiham*, Dhōṭaka Pañha (Sn 1066; Nc:CSCD 88) = Mettagū Pañha (Sn 1053; Nc:CSCD 62, 67); as *itihītiham*, Hemaka (Sn 1084; Nc:CSCD 112) = Anugīti Gāthā (conclusion) (Sn 1135; Nc:CSCD 191).

²⁶ In its positive form, *iti, kirāya, paramparāya... na atta, paccakkham dhammaṃ* (Nc 108). See Jayatilleke 1963:198 f, 202.

is our teacher.’ [‘This recluse is respected by us.’] (*mā samaṇo no garū ti*),” all found in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta.

The Culla Niddesa gloss given above contains only seven positions (2-8) of the Kesa,puttiya Sutta—from *iti,kirā* to *diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khanti*²⁷—which seems to imply that they altogether comprise *iti,hīti,ha*. Positions (1), (9) and (10) of the Kesa,puttiya Sutta are not found in the Culla Niddesa definition. Is *iti,-kirā* synonymous with *iti,hīti,ha* (no 1 of the Culla Niddesa list here)? This is difficult to know from lack of internal evidence [but see Comy 3a(4) below].

Apparently, the list of ten doubtful points (as listed in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta, for example) are not exhaustive. However, they are representative of the various unsatisfactory sources of knowledge. Furthermore, the ten positions are not always mutually exclusive. There is some overlapping or connection of positions. For example, the terms *iti,ha* (traditional instruction, oral tradition) and *anīti,ha* (that which is neither traditional instruction nor oral tradition) are explained in terms of seven of the ten doubtful points, all of which appear to be included under *anussava* (oral tradition) or its antonym.

The bottom line is that early Buddhism (as preserved in the Pali Canon) rejects any kind of knowledge based on authority as an effective means of spiritual liberation. The only true source of knowledge are our **experience**, that is, how things appear to oneself through the six senses, especially the mind, when they are properly understood.

Philosophy sometimes defines experience differently, for example, as “[t]he guiding or misleading idea is that for each of us certainty is possible only with regard to our own experience, in this cribbed and ‘private’ interpretation, and that any claims to experience in the everyday or ‘public’ sense must be incorrigibly reckless” (Flew 1979:116 f). However, for Buddhists, this need not be the case, as an external truth (such as another person’s spiritual state) can be known simply through “right inference” (*naya*) [Comy 3a(6)1], or better, through “inferential knowledge” (*anvaye ñāṇa*) [Comy 3a(6)2].

Inferential knowledge, however, only obtains after one has attained some level of spiritual liberation, that is, when the mind has attained some true level of calm and clarity. The bottom line is that the answer is not out there: it is found only within oneself.

5 Religions, true and false

5.1 THE TRUTH AND USEFULNESS OF A RELIGION. Another interesting and important feature to be noted in the list of ten doubtful points or theses as given in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta is that the Buddha does not declare that they are false. They are to be examined, firstly, for their truth value (whether they are true and useful), and, secondly, whether they have moral worth.

The first case—regarding the truth and usefulness of a view or teaching—is explained in **the Caṅkī Sutta** (M 95).²⁸ As in **the (Musīla) Kosambī Sutta** (S 12.68)²⁹ and **the Atthi Nu Kho Pariyāya Sutta** (S 35.153)³⁰ [4], the Caṅkī Sutta, too, state that a view or teaching may be taken up in any of these five ways:³¹

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| (1) through faith | (<i>saddhā</i>), |
| (2) through personal preference | (<i>ruci</i>), |
| (3) through repeated hearing | (<i>anussava</i>), |
| (4) through specious reasoning [reasoned thought] | (<i>ākāra,parivitakka</i>), and |
| (5) through being convinced [through acceptance of] a view after pondering on it | (<i>diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khanti</i>). |

Even the profoundest teaching based on any of these five positions may turn out “in either of two different ways here and now”: it may be fully accepted through faith, etc, “yet it may be hollow, empty, false

²⁷ The first two positions are reversed in the two sets.

²⁸ M 95/2:164-177 = SD 21.15. Briefly mentioned in **Deva,daha S** (M 101.11/2:218) = SD 18.4.

²⁹ S 12.68/2:115-118.

³⁰ S 35.153/4:138-140.

³¹ These five are discussed in detail in Jayatilleke 1963:812-188, 274-276.

(*rittaṃ tuccaṃ musā*),” but something else may not be fully accepted through faith, etc, “yet it may be true, real, unmistaken (*bhūtaṃ tacchaṃ anaññathā*).”³²

In other words, the validity or truth of a teaching or religion is not that one has faith in it, nor that one prefers it to others (one likes it, etc), nor that one is used to listening to it (such as childhood conditioning), nor that one has reasons or reasoning, no matter how good, for it, nor that one has accepted it through having long thought about it. The validity and usefulness of a teaching or religion lies in its ability to provide a sustainable moral life as a basis for mental calm and clarity, so that one realizes inner liberation for oneself.

5.2 THE MORAL WORTH OF A RELIGION. The second point to note is that if a view or teaching lacks moral worth, it is to be rejected. These views and teachings that are condemned as false in the sense that they do not conduce to the moral life (*abrahma, cariya, vāsa*), as pointed in **the Sandaka Sutta** (M 76)³³ and **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2),³⁴ are as follows:

- (1) **Materialism** (M 76.7-9), that is, the notion that this is our only life, there is no afterlife, there is no such thing as charity, no karma, no parents, and “there are no recluses and brahmins who, living rightly and practising rightly, having directly known and realized for themselves this world and the hereafter, proclaim them.”³⁵ **The Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2.22) ascribes this view to Ajita Kesa,kambala, who was also an annihilationist.³⁶
- (2) **Amoralism** or non-action (*akiriya, vāda*) (M 76.10-12), which denies moral virtue (that is, there is neither good nor evil), that is, there is no evil when one breaks the precepts or cause others to do so. Even if one were to commit mass murder or commit violent acts, such as torture, there is no evil. “In generosity, self-taming, self-restraint, and truthful speech, there is no merit, no source of merit.”³⁷ **The Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2.22) ascribes this view to Puraṇa Kassapa.³⁸

We find a further three important examples of amoralism mentioned in **the Tittth’āyatana Sutta** (A 3.61), which opens with the Buddha pointing out these three common wrong views in his days as being examples of doctrines of non-action:

Monks, there are three sectarian doctrines³⁹ which when fully examined, investigated, discussed by the wise, even if taken in any other way,⁴⁰ will remain **a doctrine of non-action** (*akiriya, vāda*).⁴¹ What are the three?

(a) DETERMINISM. There are, monks, some recluses and brahmins who teach and hold this view: “Whatever a person experiences, whether pleasurable, painful or neutral, all that is caused by past action [done in past lives] (*pubbe kata, hetu*).”⁴²

³² M 95.14/2:170 f = SD 21.15.

³³ M 76.7-19/1:514-521 = SD 35.7. See Jayatilleke 1963:140-143.

³⁴ On the 6 sectarian teachers, see D 2.16-33/1:52-59 = SD 8.10.

³⁵ Also at **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41.10/1:287) = SD 5.7 & **Sandaka S** (M 76.7/1:515) = SD 35.7. See **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60.5-12/1:401-404) = SD 35.5 where this wrong view is answered.

³⁶ D 2.21-23/1:55 = SD 8.10.

³⁷ See **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60.13-20/1:404-407) where this view is answered.

³⁸ D 2.16-17/1:52 f = SD 8.10.

³⁹ “Sectarian doctrines,” *tittth’āyatanāni*. M 1:483,21,23; A 1:173, 175; Nc 154; Vbh 145, 367; AA 2:272; DhA 2:63.

⁴⁰ “Even if taken in any other way,” *param pi gantvā*. I have taken the Pali as it is *pace* Comy which glosses it as *yaṇ kiñci paramparaṇ gantvā pi*, “even if adopted because of tradition” (A:ÑB 61).

⁴¹ **Sāmañña,phala S** ascribes the doctrine of non-action to Puraṇa Kassapa (D 2.17/1:52 f). “Although on first encounter the view seems to rest on materialistic premises... there is canonical evidence that Puraṇa Kassapa subscribed to a fatalistic doctrine. Thus his moral antinomianism probably follows from the view that all action is predestined in ways that abrogate the ascription of moral responsibility to its agent.” (M:ÑB 1264 n629). See AL Basham, *History and Doctrine of the Ajivikas*, 1951:84.

(b) THEISM. There are, monks, others who teach and hold this view: “Whatever a person experiences ... all that is caused by God’s creation (*issara, nimmāna, hetu*).”⁴³

(c) FATALISM. There are, monks, others who teach and hold this view: “Whatever a person experiences ... all that is uncaused and unconditioned (*ahetu appaccaya*).”⁴⁴

(A 3.61.1/1:173 = SD 6.9)

The first view, **determinism**—that everything that one feels now is due to what one did in the past—is discussed in detail in **the Devadaha Sutta** (M 101), where it is said to be a Jain view.⁴⁵ They held that all suffering one experiences in this life is due to bad karma from a previous life. The Devadaha Sutta shows that this as a wrong view.⁴⁶

The God-idea (**theism**) becomes especially problematic, even destructive, when it attributes all things (“creation”) to God, thus leaving humans with practically no sense of personal responsibility, or worse, to ascribe all their actions as being willed by God. Such a system effectively lacks personal moral responsibility, or at least would not value human life, since its creator would come first.

Of these three deterministic notions, the most harmful is of course the third, that of **fatalism**, which is also a characteristic of the “non-causality doctrine” (see following).

- (3) **Non-causality**, fatalism or determinism (*ahetuka, vāda*) (M 76.13-15), which denies moral responsibility, that is, there is no cause (*hetu*)⁴⁷ for moral degeneration, moral growth, or spiritual liberation. There is neither cause nor condition for the purification of beings. There is nothing self-caused, nothing other-caused, nothing human-caused; nor effort of any kind.⁴⁸ We are powerless, and subject to the changes of fate, circumstances and nature, and we feel pleasure and pain reborn in the six social classes.⁴⁹ There are a fixed number of origins, karma, beings, and time, and “having transmigrated⁵⁰ and wandered on through these, the wise and the foolish alike will put an end to pain.” There is neither karma nor moral life. Please and pain, like everything, are fixed. “Just as a ball of string, when thrown, comes to its end simply by unwinding, in the same way, having transmigrated and wandered on, the wise and the foolish alike will put an end to pain.” **The Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2.19) ascribes this view to Makkhali Gosāla.⁵¹

⁴² This determinist view is ascribed by the Buddhists to the Jains; but cf **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.28-30/1:57 & nn), where Nigaṇṭha Naṭaputta is ascribed a different set of teachings. For rebuttal, see **Devadaha S** (M 101).

⁴³ This theist view is common among the brahmins.

⁴⁴ This fatalist view (that denies causality) was taught by Makkhali Gosāla, a contemporary of the Buddha who held that all things are fated (D 2.20/1:53, M 30.2/1:198, 36.5/1:238, 36.48/1:250, 60.21/1:407, 76.53/1:524, 77.6/2:2 ff). This doctrine, together with the doctrine of non-action (or inaction) belongs to the “wrong views with a fixed destiny” (*niyata micchā, diṭṭhi*), ie a wrong view leading to a bad rebirth (Tkp 168).

⁴⁵ M 101/2:101-228 = SD 18.4.

⁴⁶ For further discussion, see SD 17.3(6.4): “Not everything is due to past karma.”

⁴⁷ *Ahetu, appaccayā*: “condition” *hetu* means “root” (eg greed, hatred, delusion); *paccaya* means “condition.”

⁴⁸ These ideas are presented by a certain brahmin to the Buddha who refutes them in **Atta, kāri S** (A 6.38/3:337 f) = SD 7.6.

⁴⁹ See **Apannaṅka S** (M 60.21-28) where this wrong view is answered. On these 6 classes (*abhijāti*), see **Cha-ḷ-abhijāti S** (A 6.3:383), where according to the antinomian **Pūraṇa Kassapa**, they are (1) the black class (*kaṇhābhijāti*), ie the bloody trade (butchers, fishermen, robbers, etc); (2) the blue class (*nīlābhijāti*), ie monks who subscribe to karma; (3) the red class (*lohitābhijāti*), ie the loin-clad Jains; (4) the yellow class (*haliddābhijāti*), ie the white-clad disciples of naked ascetics; (5) the white class (*sukkābhijāti*), ie the male and female Ājīvikas; (6) the purest white class (*parama, sukkhābhijāti*), ie Nanda Vaccha, Kisa Saṅkicca and Makkhali Gosāla. The Buddha however rejects this arbitrary gesture, and teaches that it is karma that makes us, not class (A 6.57/3:383-387; also DA 1:182; MA 3:131; AA 2:342 f; SA 2:342 f)

⁵⁰ *Sandhāvitvā*, “having transmigrated” (from *sandhāvati*). This term which connotes a permanent soul is not used in Buddhism.

⁵¹ D 2.18-20/1:53-55 = SD 8.10.

(4) **Atomism** or physicalism (M 76.16-18), which holds that only matter exists by way of seven substances or “bodies” (*kāya*)—the earth-substance, the liquid-substance, the fire-substance, the wind-substance, happiness, pain, and the soul—“uncreated, irreducible, barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar, that do not obstruct with one another, are incapable of causing one another happiness, pain or both happiness and pain.... And among them there is no killer nor one who causes killing, no hearer nor one who causes hearing, no knower nor one who causes knowing. When one cuts off a (person’s) head, there is no one taking anyone’s life. The sword simply passes through the seven substances.” **The Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2.25) ascribes this view to Pakudha Kaccāyana.⁵²

The other two views mentioned in the Sāmañña,phala Sutta are the recluse practice (that is, the fourfold restraint)⁵³ of Nigaṇṭha Naṭa,putta⁵⁴ and the agnosticism of Sañjaya Belaṭṭha,putta.⁵⁵

The four views stated above are rejected outright by the Buddha because they do not conduce to the religious life (*abrahma, cariya, vāsa*), that is, they are false religions. In fact, they are generally very self-centred views, and as such are also anti-social. The ten doubtful points listed in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta do not fall into the category of *abrahma, cariya, vāsa*, in that they are really modes of inquiry or possible sources of knowledge. However, not all knowledge are useful in terms of personal development or spiritual growth: the value of knowledge lies most importantly in its moral worthiness: that is, it does not harm oneself, others or the environment, and conduces to one’s moral life, mental development and spiritual liberation.

Understandably, the Buddha advised the Kālāmas that they should examine the moral worthiness of a view or teaching, and accepting it only if it conduces to one moral virtue. A view based on any of the ten doubtful points are to be *rejected* for this reason:

When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,
 “These things are unwholesome. These things are blamable. These things are censured by the wise. These things, when undertaken and practised, bring about harm and suffering.”
 —Then Kālāmas, you should abandon them.’ [§§3b, 8]

⁵² D 2.24-26/1:56 f = SD 8.10. Here **Sandaka S** (M 76.16-18/1:517 f), conflates the ideas of Pakudha Kaccāyana (D 2.26/1:56) and of Makkhali Gosāla (D 2.18-20/1:53-55). See M:NB 1281 n752. The Dīgha tradition appears to be the correct one: see Bodhi (tr), *The Discourse on the Fruits of Reclusheship*, 1989:72-77.

⁵³ “The Nigaṇṭha is obstructed by all the waters, conjoined with all the waters, cleansed by all the waters, suffused with all the waters [ie the avoidance of all evil]” (*sabba, vāri, vārito, sabba, vāri, yuto, sabba, vāri, dhuto, sabba, vāri, phuṭṭo* (with some vll), which do not represent the genuine Jain teaching, but seem to parody it in puns. The Jains do have a rule of restraint in regard to water, and *vāri* can mean “water,” “restraint,” or possibly “sin,” and some of the verbal forms are equally dubious. The reference to one “free from bonds” and yet bound by these restraints (whatever they are) is a deliberate paradox. (KR Norman in M Walshe (tr), *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, 1996:545 n115)

⁵⁴ D 2.27-29/1:57 f = SD 8.10. (Skt) Nirgrantha Jñāti,putra. The name given in the Pali Canon to Vardhamāna Mahāvīra (ca. 540-568 BCE?), the leader of the Jains. He is several times unfavourably referred to in the Canon, eg **Upāli S** (M 56). *Nigaṇṭha* means “free from bonds.” On Nigaṇṭha Nāta,putta, see Jayatilleke 1963:140 f (see index) & Jaini (1970) 2001:57-61.

⁵⁵ D 2.31-32/1:58 f = SD 8.10. (Skt) Sañjayin Vairāṭṭī,putra; also called (P) Belaṭṭhi,putta. Although he is put in unfavourable light in the Pali texts, there appears to be a serious note to his philosophy. It is likely that his standpoint is not made out of ignorance but based on the notion that knowledge was not necessary, even dangerous for salvation. In other words, when one really knows nothing, one then realizes everything. **Shosun Miyamoto**, in his article “The logic of relativity as the common ground for the development of the middle way” (in Yamaguchi (ed) *Buddhism and Culture*, 1960: 67-88) asserts that Sañjaya’s “system is quite near to the Buddhist standpoint of [the] indescribable or inexpressible [*avyākata*]” and that “Sañjaya’s thought is not far removed from the logic of *Śūnya* of the Mādhyamika.” For a study of Sañjaya as a skeptic, see Jayatilleke 1963:130-135, 336-339 (see index) & Jaini (1970) 2001:57-61.

Or, they should be accepted if,

When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,
 “These things are unwholesome. These things are blamable. These things are censured by the
 wise. These things, when undertaken and practised, bring about harm and suffering.”
 —Then Kālāmas, you should abandon them.’ [§§9b, 14]

“So I have spoken; it is for this reason that I have spoken” (*iti yam tam vuttam idam etam paṭicca vuttam*), the Buddha then declares each time, and the passage on the ten doubtful points immediately follow [8, 9a, 14]. In short, all reports or religions may contain some truth, but although they are not false, they unsatisfactory (*anassāsikam*), that is, they provide no guarantee for spiritual liberation. [§7]

5.3 CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO SPIRITUAL LIBERATION.

(1) Two conditions for learning. The **Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43) mentions two conditions for the arising of right view, namely, “the voice of another” (*parato,ghosa*) and wise attention (*yoniso,manasikāra*) (M 1:294; A 1:87) [5.4]. The Sutta Commentary explains that wise attention is the personal skillful means of minding (*attano upāya,manasikāra*), and that the voice of another is “the listening to conducive Dharma” (*sappāya,dhamma-s,savana*) (MA 2:346).⁵⁶

Attention (*manasikāra*) is a Buddhist psychological term belonging to the definition of “name” (*nāma*) of name-and-form (*nāma,rūpa*), as found in **the Sammā,diṭṭhi Sutta** (M 9):

Feeling, perception, volition, contact and attention⁵⁷—these are called name.
 (*Vedanā saññā cetanā phasso manasikāro idam vuccati nāmam*). (M 9.54/1:53) = SD 11.14

In the Abhidhamma, *manasikāra* belongs to the formations aggregate (*saṅkhāra-k,khandha*) and is one of the seven mental factors (*cetasika*),⁵⁸ inseparably associated with all states of consciousness. In other words, it is referred to a morally significant process. If it is motivated by greed, hate or delusion, it is regarded as unwholesome, and called “unwise attention” (*ayoniso,manasikāra*); if it is free from greed, hate or delusion, it is generally said to be wholesome, and called “wise attention” (*yoniso,manasikāra*).

Manasikāra is the very first stage of the mind’s encounter with an object,⁵⁹ and it holds the associated mental factors to the object. As such, it is the prominent factor in two specific classes of consciousness, that is, advertence (*āvajjana*) at the five-sense doors and at the mind-door. These two states of consciousness, breaking through into the life continuum (*bhavaṅga*), form the first stage of the perceptual process (*citta,vīthi*).⁶⁰

The term *manasikāra* is more commonly found in the suttas as the term, “wise attention” (*yoniso,-manasikāra*). It is found throughout **the Sabb’āsava Sutta** (M 2), in fact, its key action word, and where it is said to counteract the mental cankers.⁶¹ **The Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43) says that wise attention is a condition for the arising of right view (M 43),⁶² of stream-winning,⁶³ and of the awakening-factors.⁶⁴

⁵⁶ MA says that these two conditions—“the voice of another” and “wise attention”—are necessary for the disciple desiring to arrive at the right view of insight and the right view of the supramundane path. But the Individual Buddhas (*pacceka,buddha*) and the omniscient Buddhas (*sabbaññū,buddha*) arrive at their awakening solely in dependence on wise attention without “the voice of another.” (MA 2:346)

⁵⁷ On “name-and-form,” see SD 17.1a(4). On “name,” see Analayo, *Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya* (draft), 2005:23 n121 (at M 1:53).

⁵⁸ The 7 are sense-impression (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), concentration (*samādhi*), vitality (*jīvita*), and attention (*manasikāra*). See Abhs:BRS 2.2(7) (Guide).

⁵⁹ “*Manasikāra* should be distinguished from *vitakka*: while the former turns its concomitants towards the object, the latter applies them onto the object. *Manasikāra* is an indispensable cognitive factor present in all states of consciousness; *vitakka* is a specialized factor which is not indispensable to cognition.” (Abhs:BRS 2.2(7) (Guide).

⁶⁰ See Vism 14.152/466 & **The unconscious** = SD 17.8b(5).

⁶¹ M 2/1:6-12 = SD 30.3. “Mental cankers,” *āsava*. The term *āsava* (lit “cankers”) comes from *ā-savati*, meaning “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously tr as influxes, taints

The term *yoniso* (in *yoniso manasikāra*) comes from *yonī*, meaning “the womb, origin (place of birth).” As such, *yoniso* means “down to its origin or foundation” (PED), and *yoniso manasikāra* means “directing the attention to the roots of things,” that is, observing phenomena as they truly are, as being characterized by impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self.

(2) The perception of impermanence. The opposite of wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is “un-wise attention” (*ayoniso manasikāra*), which basically involves seeking or seeing permanence in the impermanent, pleasure in the painful, and a personal entity in what is not self. It leads to the arising of the mental cankers (M 2),⁶⁵ and of the mental hindrances.⁶⁶ Mental cultivation is simply impossible under such circumstances.

In spiritual practice, one only need to begin and focus on the perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*) in one’s being and experiences (for example, reflecting on how one is nothing more than the five aggregates)⁶⁷ and in all phenomena (that is, noting the rising and falling of things).⁶⁸ **The Indriya,bhāvanā Sutta** (M 152), for example, explains how a “good worldly” (one amenable to the spiritual life, whether lay or monastic) keeps to “the supreme cultivation of the faculties in the noble one’s discipline (*ariyassa vinaye anuttarā indriya,bhāvanā*), that is, by regarding all sense-experiences and mentation as “conditioned, gross, and dependently arisen,” or in simple terms, by noting their momentariness or impermanence. (M 152.4-9)⁶⁹

The perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*) is in fact the key practice for a lay Buddhist, as clearly exhorted in the ten discourses (by way of perceptions of impermanence) of **the Okkanti Saṃyutta**. One who accepts the truth of impermanence after pondering over them with some wisdom⁷⁰ (by way of wise attention) is called a **truth-follower**, and one who accepts the truth of impermanence through wise faith (either by another’s voice [5.4] or by wise attention) is called a **faith-follower**. The ten Suttas declare regarding either of them:

He has entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of superior persons, gone beyond the plane of the worldlings.

(“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 kinds of *āsava*: the cankers of (1) sense-desire (*kāma’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yogā*). The list of 3 cankers (omitting the canker of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10-20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these cankers is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: *āsava*.

⁶² M 43.13/1:294 = SD 35.1.

⁶³ It is one of the limbs for stream-winning (*sotāpatti-y-aṅgāni*, alt tr “limbs of stream-winning”): (1) association with true persons (ie true practitioners, esp saints); (2) hearing the True Teaching; (3) wise attention; (4) practice of the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma (D 33.1.11(13)/3:227; Pm 2:189 f). These are preliminary practices that lead to the attainment of streamwinning. In **Paññā,vaḍḍhi S** (A 5.246) these same 4 qualities are called *vaḍḍhi,dhamma*, “virtues conducive to growth” (A 5.246/2:245); cf the 5 factors of noble growth (*ariya,vaḍḍhi*): **(Tadah’) Uposatha S** (A 3.70.8b/1:210) = SD 4.18; **Sambadh’okāsa S** (A 6.26.8/3:316) = SD 15.7a; **Pañca Vaḍḍhi S 1** (A 5.63/3:80); **Pañca Vaḍḍhi S 2** (A 5.64/3:80). See S:B 762 n120. Cf (2) *sotāpannassa aṅgāni*. In **Pañca,bhera,bhaya S** (S 12.41/2:68-70) = SD 3.3(4.2).

⁶⁴ See SD 10.1(8); **Kāya S** (S 46.2/5:64-67); **(Bojjhaṅga) Sīla S** (S 46.3/5:67-70) = SD 10.15; **(Ajjhatta) Aṅga S** (S 46.49/5:101), **(Bahiddhā) Aṅga S** (S 46.50/5:102), **Āhāra S** (S 46.51/5:102-107) = SD 7.15.

⁶⁵ M 2/1:6-12 = SD 30.3.

⁶⁶ The mental hindrances are: (1) sense-desire (*kāma-c,chanda*), (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*), (3) sloth and torpor (*thīna,middha*), (4) restlessness and worry (*uddhacca,kukkucca*), and (5) doubt (*vicikicchā*): S 46.2, 51.

⁶⁷ On a detailed study of the 5 aggregates, see SD 17.

⁶⁸ **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54.15/4:285) = SD 5.10. See below 5.5.

⁶⁹ M 152.4-9/3:299 f = SD 17.13.

⁷⁰ *Yassa kho bhikkhave ime dhammā evaṃ paññāya mattaso nijjhānam khamanti.*

He is incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal birth, or in the ghost realm. He is incapable of dying without attaining the fruit of stream-winning. (S 25.1-10/3:225 ff): see SD 16.7

5.4 ANOTHER’S VOICE. “The voice of another” (*parato,ghosa*) is one of the key concepts of early Buddhism that apparently has not received any scholarly attention, except perhaps by **Peter Masefield**.⁷¹ In the second paragraph of his section on “*Parato ghosa*,” Masefield claims that “the Nikāyas appeared to be almost totally silent upon the question of how right view was to be attained...[except] for one cryptic message, found on only two occasions” (1986:50): he is of course referring to the “two conditions that give rise to right view,”⁷² that is, another’s voice (*parato ghosa*) and wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*).⁷³ We have discussed the latter, wise attention [5.3], so we will focus our discussion here on the former, another’s voice.

The Āṅguttara Commentary explains *parato ghosa* in the context of giving rise to wrong view as “hearing the false Dharma before [in the presence of] another” (*parassa santikā asaddhamma,savanam*), and in the context of giving rise to right view as that of “hearing the true Dharma” (*saddhamma,savanam*) (AA 2:157).

The Majjhima Commentary is more informative. It glosses another’s voice as “the listening to conducive Dharma” (*sappāya,dhamma-s,savana*), and adds that wise attention is the method of the Pratyeka Buddhas and the All-knowing Buddhas, since there is no *parato ghosa* for them. *Parato ghosa* is the means of the listeners or disciples (*sāvaka*) (MA 2:346). This interpretation is supported by **the Sutta Nipāta Commentary** which says that the “noble listener [disciple]” (*ariya,sāvaka*) is one who is characterized by “hearing (the Dharma) before the aryas” (*ariyānaṃ santike sutattā*) (SnA 166).

The Nālaka Sutta (Sn 3.11) records how Asita’s prophesizes to his nephew Nālaka regarding the Buddha’s awakening, and how the latter goes to the Buddha himself:

<i>Buddho ti ghosaṃ yada parato suṇāsi sambodhi,patto vicarati dhammam aggam</i>	When you hear <u>the sound</u> , “Buddha,” from others, he, attained to self-awakening, moves in the foremost Dharma,
<i>gantvāna tattha samayaṃ paripucchiyāno carassu tasmim bhagavati brahmacariyaṃ</i>	going there, asking about the doctrine (<i>samaya</i>), live the holy life under that Blessed One. (Sn 696)

<i>Sutvāna ghosaṃ jina,vara,cakka,vattane gantvāna disvā isi,nisabham pasanno moneyya,seṭṭham muni,pavaram apucchi samāgate Asita,vhayassa sāsane ti</i>	Hearing <u>the voice</u> of the noble conqueror’s wheel-turning, going, seeing the lordly bull of seers, he becomes faithful. He asked the noble sage about supreme sagehood; when the one called Asita’s message had come to pass. (Sn 698)
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The Majjhima Commentary cites the well known case of Sāriputta’s conversion. Although he has fulfilled a hundred thousand aeons [world-cycles] (*kappa*) and one uncountable aeon (*asankheyya kappa*)⁷⁴ and, he is still unable to destroy even an iota (*aṇumatta*) of defilement, and yet upon hearing a single stanza from the newly awakened elder Assaji (MA 2:346), he is able to realize the Dharma eye (V 1:40), which the Dhammapada Commentary confirms as the attainment of stream-winning (DhA 1:92 f).

It is said that during their first meeting, Sāriputta earnestly requests for a teaching from Assaji, who then recites:

⁷¹ 1986: ch 2 esp 50-54.

⁷² *Dve’me...paccayā sammā,diṭṭhiyā uppādāya.*

⁷³ **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 49.13/1:294; A 2.11.9/1:87).

⁷⁴ An uncountable aeon is one of the 4 “uncountable aeons” of the full world-cycle (*kappa*), and here prob refers to the stable state of the 4 cycles: the other three are the collapsing (or devolving) universe, the collapsed (or devolved) universe, the evolving universe, and the evolved or stable universe. See **Aggañña S** (D 27.10-13/3:84-86) = SD 2.10 & Appendix.

Of all things that arise from a cause, *Ye dhammā hetu-p,pabhavā*
 Their cause the Tathāgata has told. *tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha*

As soon as Sāriputta hears these first two lines, he is established in the fruit of stream-winning. Then Assaji completes the stanza:

And also how these cease to be— *tesañ ca yo nirodho*
 This too the great sage has told. *evaṃ vādī mahā,samaṇo*

Sāriputta then relays the stanza to his best friend, Moggallāna, who similarly gains the fruit of stream-winning on hearing the first two lines. Both of them then become the Buddha's disciples.⁷⁵

It is possible to interpret *parato ghosa* in a figurative sense as “the voice from beyond,” as suggested by Masefield, thus:

Moreover, whilst *para-* is used to denote other people, it can also refer to the beyond, the further side and so on, as in, for instance, such terms as *paraloka* and the distinct possibility exists that the phrase *parato ghoso* may have originally meant “the sound from the Beyond” in the sense of the sound of the supermundane Dhamma; though it would at the same time also be true to say that it is “the voice of another” in the sense that it requires another person—usually the Buddha but on occasion, as in the case of Sāriputta, some other ariyan—to mediate it. (1986:52)

The “voice from the beyond” should clearly be taken in its *figurative* sense as referring to the truth regarding the afterlife, and also liberation from suffering (that is, *samsara*) itself. This interpretation helps to explain the numerous occasions when many of the early disciples who attain various stages of sainthood merely by listening to the Buddha or one of the awakened disciples teaching.

The awakening of the two foremost disciples are classic examples of liberation through hearing “the voice from beyond.” **The Dīgha,nakha Sutta** (M 74) records how Sāriputta, two weeks after his joining the order, while standing behind the Buddha fanning him and listening to the Buddha discoursing on feeling to his nephew, Dīgha,nakha, gains arhathood:

Now at that time, the venerable Sāriputta⁷⁶ was standing behind the Blessed One, fanning him.⁷⁷ Then he thought:

“The Blessed One, indeed, speaks to us of the abandoning of these things through direct knowledge.⁷⁸ The Sugata [the well-gone], indeed, speaks to us of the relinquishing of these things through direct knowledge.”

As the venerable Sāriputta reflected thus, through not clinging, his mind was liberated from the mental cankers.⁷⁹ (M 74.14/1:500 f) = SD 16.1

Similarly, **the Pacalā Sutta** (A 7.58) records how the Buddha admonishes the newly ordained Moggallāna as he struggles with drowsiness while meditating. The Buddha teaches him eight ways of dealing with

⁷⁵ V 1:40 f; J 1:85. After the Buddha's passing, esp during the late Gupta until the end of the Pāla period (c 600-1200 CE), this verse attained cult status as inscriptions often interred in stupas. See Daniel Boucher, “The *Pratītya-samutpādagāthā* and its role in the medieval cult of the relics,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14,1 1991: 1-27.

⁷⁶ Comy says that this is two weeks (*aḍḍha,māsa,pabbajitena*) after Sāriputta's going forth (MA 3:203).

⁷⁷ On monks fanning the Buddha, see Introd (4) above.

⁷⁸ “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)

⁷⁹ “Mental cankers,” *āsava*. See SD 16.1(5.3n).

drowsiness and the conditions conducive to mental concentration. At the end of the teaching, Moggallāna becomes an arhat.⁸⁰

5.5 SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP. The Mahā Vedalla Sutta (M 43) goes on to say that **right view** (pertaining to the path of arhathood) is assisted by five factors when it has the liberation of mind (from lust) and liberation by wisdom (from ignorance) as the goal (both referring to the fruit of arhathood). These five factors are: moral conduct, learning, discussion, calmness and insight. (M 43)⁸¹

These teachings are also found in **the Saṃyutta Nikāya** and **the Iti,vuttaka** where it is said that spiritual friendship is the chief *external support* for spiritual development and skillful means its chief *internal support*.⁸² Here, moral conduct, learning and discussion would fall under the category of **spiritual friendship**,⁸³ while calmness and insight (that is, cultivation or meditation) come under **wise attention**. As wise attention has already been discussed [5.3], we will only look at spiritual friendship here.

For the lay follower, the Buddha gives this instruction of spiritual friendship, found in **the Dīgha,-jānu Sutta** (A 8.54), under “worldly welfare”:

Here, Vyagghapajja, in whatever village or market town the son of family dwells, he associates, converses, discusses with householders or householders’ sons, young men mature in virtue, or old men mature in virtue, endowed with faith, moral virtue, charity and wisdom.⁸⁴ He emulates the faith⁸⁵ of the faithful, the virtue of the virtuous, the charity of charitable, and the wisdom of the wise.
(A 8.54.6/4:282) = SD 5.10

The four spiritual qualities are defined in the Sutta’s section on spiritual welfare as follows:

12 (1) What is the accomplishment of faith?

Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family has (wise) faith. He has faith in the Buddha’s awakening thus: ‘The Blessed One is an arhat, the fully self-awakened one, accomplished in wisdom and conduct, well-farer, knower of worlds, peerless guide of tamable people, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.’

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of faith.

(2) What is the accomplishment of moral virtue?

13 Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family abstains from harming life, from taking the not-given, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, from strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness.

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of moral virtue.

(3) What is the accomplishment of charity?

⁸⁰ A 7.58/4:85-91 = SD 4.11

⁸¹ M 43/1:294) = SD 35.1.

⁸² **Kalyāṇa,mitta S** (S 45.49/5:5:29), **Sīla,sampadā S** (S 45.55/5:30 f); It 16, 17

⁸³ See **Spiritual friendship** = SD 8.1.

⁸⁴ These four are the conditions for spiritual welfare: see SD 5.10 §11.

⁸⁵ “Faith,” *saddhā*. There are 2 kinds of faith (*saddhā*): (1) “rootless faith” (*amūlaka,saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith. (M 2:170); (2) “faith with a good cause” (*ākāravati,saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 1:320,8 401,23); also called *avecca-p,pasāda* (S 12.41.11/2:69). “Wise faith” is syn with (2). *Amūlaka* = “not seen, not heard, not suspected” (V 2:243 3:163 & Comy). **Gethin** speaks of two kinds of faith: the cognitive and the affective (eg ERE: Faith & Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:387): “Faith in its cognitive dimension is seen as concerning belief in propositions or statements of which one does not—or perhaps cannot—have knowledge proper (however that should be defined); cognitive faith is a mode of knowing in a different category from that knowledge. Faith is its affective dimension is a more straightforward positive response to trust or confidence towards something or somebody...the conception of *saddhā* in Buddhist writings appears almost, if not entirely affective, the cognitive element is completely secondary.” (Gethin 2001:207; my emphases).

14 Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family dwells in at home with a heart free from the stain of miserliness, devoted to charity, open-handed, delighting in giving, devoted to alms-giving, delighting to have a share in giving.⁸⁶

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of charity.

(4) What is the accomplishment of wisdom? [285]

15 Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family is wise, possesses wisdom directed to [noting] the rising and falling away [of phenomena] that is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of suffering.

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of wisdom.

These are the four things that lead to the welfare and happiness of a son of family in the world to come. (A 8.54.12-15/4:284 f) = SD 5.10

In the **Meghiya Sutta** (A 9.3 = U 4.1), the following five factors—very similar to the four given in the **Dīghajānu Sutta**—are given by the Buddha to the monk Meghiya for his training:

1. Spiritual friendship. [Here referring to wise faith, *saddhā*.]⁸⁷
2. Moral conduct in keeping with the code of discipline, seeing danger in the slightest fault. [Moral conduct.]
3. Talk on contentment, aloofness and the spiritual life. [Study and discussion.]
4. Energy in abandoning unwholesome states and promoting wholesome states. [Calmness.]
5. The wisdom that sees the rise and fall of phenomena that leads to the complete destruction of suffering. [Insight.] (A 9.3/4:357 = U 4.136 f; UA 221) = SD 34.2

From the above discussion, it is obvious that spiritual friendship is crucial in personal development, and this is in fact attested by the Buddha in a dialogue with Ānanda, as recorded in the **Upaḍḍha Sutta** (S 45.2), thus:

“Venerable sir, spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship, is half of the holy life.”

“Not so, Ānanda! Not so, Ānanda! Spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship, is **the whole of the holy life**. When a monk has a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa, mittassa... bhikkhuno*),⁸⁸ a good companion, a good comrade, it is to be expected that he will develop the noble eightfold path.

And how, Ānanda, does a monk who has a spiritual friend...develop the noble eightfold path?

Here, Ānanda, a monk develops right view, which is based on seclusion, dispassion and cessation, maturing in release. He develops right intention...right speech...right action...right livelihood...right effort...right mindfulness...right concentration, which is based on seclusion, dispassion and cessation, maturing in release.

It is in this way, Ānanda, that a monk who has a spiritual friend...develops the noble eightfold path.

In this way, too, Ānanda, it should be known how the whole of the holy life is spiritual friendship...:

⁸⁶ This passage is stock, found in eg **Dhana S** (A 7.6/4:6), **Nakula, māta S** (A 8.48/4:268 f); cf **Vata, pada S** (S 11.11/1:228). Commented upon at Vism 7.101-106: see **Cāgānussati** = SD 15.12.

⁸⁷ Cf UA 221.

⁸⁸ *Kalyāṇa, mittassa... bhikkhuno*. This expression has often been mistranslated. **Bodhi** makes an important note here: “As an independent substantive, *kalyāṇamitta* means a good friend, ie, a spiritual friend who gives advice, guidance, and encouragement. When used in apposition to *bhikkhu*, however, *kalyāṇamitta* becomes a *bahubbīhi* compound, and the whole expression means “a bhikkhu who has a good friend.” (S:B 1890 n6).

By relying upon me as a spiritual friend, Ānanda, beings subject to birth are freed from birth, beings subject to aging are freed from aging, beings subject to death are freed from death, beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, anguish and despair are freed from them.

In this way, Ānanda, it should be known how the whole of the holy life is spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship.”

(S 5:2 f; also at S 1:87 f = 3.18; cf Sāriputta’s remark, S 5:4)

6 Testing the teacher

As mentioned above [1], Śāntarakṣita makes this famous statement in his **Tattva,saṅgraha**:

O bhikshus [said the self-awakened one], my words should be accepted by the wise only after investigation, not out of respect (for me)—just as gold (is accepted) only after heating, cutting and rubbing. (Tts ch 26/3588) [6]

Śāntarakṣita is not saying here you should simply pick and choose what you like about Buddhism. In a sense, you need not have to do so, as you would likely be drawn to you can understand and find inspiring, and would probably skim over other less teachings you find unintelligible. Śāntarakṣita’s words has three main points:

- (1) you should use your wisdom when searching the scriptures,
- (2) you should accept a teaching or instruction from a teacher simply out of respect for him, and
- (3) check out the teaching to ensure that it is wholesome, and if so, make sure you practise it.

The Vīmaṃsaka Sutta (M 47) is a complete discourse on testing the teacher before accepting him as your own. The Buddha actually invites his disciples (or anyone else) to test him to discover whether he is awakened or not, thus:

Bhikshus, an inquiring monk, not knowing another’s mind, should investigate the Tathagata in order to find out whether or not he is fully self-awakened. (M 47.2/1:317) = SD 35.6⁸⁹

The discourse goes on to instruct how this investigation is to be done, that is, he should observe through his own eyes and ears

- (1) whether either the Buddha’s bodily conduct or speech is defiled (*saṅkiliṭṭha*, that is, unwholesome);⁹⁰
- (2) whether either the Buddha’s action or speech is morally “mixed” (*vīṭimissa*) (that is, not fully wholesome);
- (3) whether purified mental states (*vodāta*) are found in the Buddha;
- (4) whether the Buddha has attained his wholesome state (*kusala dhamma*) for a long time or just recently;
- (5) whether the Buddha has reached such a height of fame that he is negatively affected by it;
- (6) whether the Buddha fearlessly restrains himself from lust (*abhayūparata*), or he does so out of fear; or whether he avoids sensual lust through having destroyed it.

Then he should go on to question the Buddha on these points so that they are confirmed to be wholesomely so. He carefully listens to the Buddha’s teaching. And if others were to question him on such matters, he would be able to confidently declare through his direct knowledge, thus⁹¹

⁸⁹ *Vīmaṃsakena bhikkhave bhikkhunā parassa ceto.pariyāyaṃ ajānantena tathāgatena samannesanā kātabbā, sammā,sambuddho vā no vā iti viññāṇāyā ti* (M 47. 1:317). Foll Be, Ce:BJT & Se: see M:ÑB 1244 n482.

⁹⁰ *...dvīsu dhammesu tathāgato sammanesitabbo, cakkhu,sota,viññeyyesu dhammesu: ye saṅkiliṭṭha cakkhu,-sota,viññeyyā dhammā samvijjanti vā te tathāgatassa no vā ti* (M 47.4/1:317)

⁹¹ *Sammā sambuddho bhagavā, svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo, supaṭipanno saṅgho’ti. Yassa kassa ci bhikkhave imehi ākārehi imehi padehi imehi byañjanehi tathāgate saddhā niviṭṭhā hoti mūla,jātā patiṭṭhitā, ayaṃ vuccatī bhikkhave ākāra,vatī saddhā dassana,mūlikā dalhā, asamhāriyā samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmiṃ.*

“The Blessed One is fully self-awakened. The Blessed One’s Dharma is well taught. The Sangha is well-practised.”

Bhikshus, when one’s faith has been planted, rooted and established in the Tathagata for these reasons, by these words, by these phrases, this faith is said to be supported by reasons, rooted in vision, firm: it is unshaken by any recluse or brahmin or god or Māra or Brahmā or by any-one in the world.⁹² (M 47.4-16/318-320, summarized) = SD 35.6⁹³

Here we have seen how spiritual investigation and wisdom leads to reasoned faith (*ākāra, vatī saddhā*) or wise faith (*avecca-p, pasāda*). The wise layman **Citta**, in a witty encounter with the Jains, however, declares that he “does not go by faith in the Blessed One” when the latter speaks of the stopping of thinking and pondering⁹⁴ in the second dhyana. The Jain leader, Nigaṇṭha Nāta,putta, takes this literally thinking that Citta has *no* faith in the Buddha, and the Nigaṇṭha even goes on to state that “knowledge, householder, is indeed superior to faith!” (*saddhāya kho gahapati nāṇaṃ yeva paṇītaram*).⁹⁵ Citta then explains that what he really means is that having understood it for himself he has no need of faith (that is, blind faith) in the Buddha!⁹⁶ [Intro 4]

7 Kesaputtiya Sutta and Pascal’s Wager

Those who summarily or vaguely take the Kesa,puttiya Sutta to be a carte blanche for “free thinking,” agnosticism or plain intellectual laziness, would be sorely disappointed to see, after a careful study of the discourse, that it is much more than a “charter of free inquiry.” In fact, it is better described as “a guide for the perplexed,” climaxing in a guarantee of spiritual liberation.

The Sutta opens with the Kālāmas of Kesa,puttiya inviting the Buddha to counsel them on the muddle and pain caused by the evangelistic zeal of visiting teachers [§§1-3]. The Buddha begins his admonition by speaking on the moral worthiness of a religion [§§4-14], and goes on to show how to cultivate positive emotions by way of the divine abodes [§§15-16]. The Buddha closes his discourse with a guarantee that whether one believes in rebirth and karma or not, as long as one’s “mind is without enmity thus, without ill will thus, uncorrupted thus, purified thus,” one would enjoy four self-assurances or spiritual solaces (*assāsa*) [§17]. Summarized schematically, we can more clearly see the guarantee of the benefits of the spiritual life:

For one whose “ <u>mind is without enmity thus, without ill will thus, uncorrupted thus, purified thus</u> ” (ie without greed, hate or delusion through the practice of the four divine abodes):	
(1) if karma and rebirth are true	one will have a good rebirth;
(2) if karma and rebirth are false	one will be happy right here;
(3) if there is karmic result for evil-doers	one faces no evil karmic result;
(4) if there is no karmic result for evil-doers	one remains pure and unaffected anyway.

Table 6. The four self-assurances [§18]

⁹² This in fact refers to the stream-winner’s faith.

⁹³ See below Comy 3a(10). See also Jayatilleke 1963:392-394.

⁹⁴ That is, initial application (*vitakka*) and sustained application (*vicāra*).

⁹⁵ Apparently, PD Premasiri (2006:128 f) misinterprets this sentence, taking it literally (as Nigaṇṭha does!), out of context.

⁹⁶ **Nigaṇṭha Nāta,putta S** (S 41.8/298 f). A similar pun is used by Sāriputta in **Pubba,koṭṭhaka S** (S 48.44/5:220-222) = SD 10.7. For a summary of Nigaṇṭha Nāta,putta S, see SD 10.7(5).

The “Buddha’s wager” is that of a proposal of a single positive choice in the face of four uncertain situations. The Buddha argues that regardless of whether the teachings of karma and rebirth are valid, even taking as if they are, brings one positive rewards here and now. The relieved and jubilant Kālāmas (or a significant number of them) go for refuge in the Three Jewels [§18].

This penultimate section of the Kesa,puttiya Sutta has often led some of the philosophically inclined to compare it to **Pascal’s wager**,⁹⁷ as if presaging it. Both the four self-assurances [§18] and Pascal’s wager are classic instances of a decision theory⁹⁸ application of a choice under uncertainty. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) gives this wager:

...you *must* wager. It is not optional... Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that He is.

(Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* 1670:3.233, Infini-Rien. Tr WF Trotter, 1910)

Pascal’s wager tries to justify belief in God not from proof of his existence but rather with an appeal to self-interest. It is in our interests to believe in the Christian God, the wager suggests, and it is therefore rational for us to do so. The wager can be simply explained in this way:

- You believe in God:
If God exists, you go to heaven: your gain is infinite.
If God does not exist, your loss (because of mistaken belief) is finite.
- You do not believe in God:
If God does not exist, your gain is finite and therefore negligible.
If God does exist, your loss is infinite: your gain is zero, and you may be punished.

Following Edward McClennen,⁹⁹ Pascal’s argument can be graphically represented in the following decision matrix:

	<i>God exists</i>	<i>God does not exist</i>
<i>Wager for God</i>	Gain all	Status quo
<i>Wager against God</i>	Misery	Status quo

The main criticisms (logical fallacies)¹⁰⁰ of Pascal’s wager are as follows:

- (1) **It assumes that there is a need for belief.** The main problem is that a decision-theoretic analysis would show that this argument regards belief in these concepts to be rational for or applicable to all non-zero levels of belief. One could, for example, simply declare that one does not believe in any of the premises!
- (2) **It assumes that God rewards belief.** It is illogical to assume that there are only these two possibilities: that (a) the Christian God exists and punishes or rewards, and (b) that God does not exist.

⁹⁷ See esp <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pascal-wager/> for an authoritative write-up and refs, or for other refs, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pascal%27s_Wager. See also **Apāṇṇaka S** (M 60) = SD 35.5 Introd.

⁹⁸ **Decision theory** is an interdisciplinary concern regarding how real or ideal decision-makers make or should make decisions, and how optimal decisions are made. The central idea in decision theory is “choice under certainty,” which characterizes Pascal’s wager. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decision_theory.

⁹⁹ Edward McClennen. “Finite Decision Theory.” In Jeff Jordan (ed) *Gambling on God: Essays on Pascal’s Wager*, Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994.

¹⁰⁰ For an easy to read “List of Common Fallacies” (Jim Walker): <http://www.nobeliefs.com/fallacies.htm>. This is also found in **Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16) = SD 9 (Appendix 2).

The wager does not account for the possibility that there may be many gods. Such a God or gods, rather than behaving as Pascal or Christians would have it, *could instead reward skepticism and punish blind faith, or reward honest reasoning and punish false faith*.

- (3) **It does not constitute a true belief.** Another logical fallacy of the wager is that if a person is uncertain whether a particular religion is true and the god of that religion is real, but that person still believes in them because of the expectation of a reward and the fear of punishment, then that belief is *not a true valid belief or a true faith* in that religion and its god. **William James** (1842-1910),¹⁰¹ in *The Will to Believe*, summarizes this argument thus:

Surely Pascal's own personal belief in masses and holy water had far other springs; and this celebrated page of his is but an argument for others, a last desperate snatch at a weapon against the hardness of the unbelieving heart. We feel that a faith in masses and holy water adopted willfully after such a mechanical calculation would lack the inner soul of faith's reality; and if we were ourselves in the place of the Deity, we should probably take particular pleasure in cutting off believers of this pattern from their infinite reward.
(*The Will to Believe*, 1897)

In modern times, this criticism is often used against evangelistic Christianity, especially those who try to incite fear such as by claiming that non-believers will go to eternal hell. Such a belief is sometimes called “afterlife insurance,” “heaven insurance,” or “hell avoidance insurance.”

- (4) **It assumes that one can choose what one believe.** This fallacy is similar to the previous one. The wager says that if one is uncertain about Christianity, one should still believe in it, just in case it is true after all. But, to believe that something is true may not be based on fact or certainty. Therefore, the wager could be interpreted to mean that if one is uncertain that it is true then *one should decide or pretend to be certain that it is*.
- (5) **It assumes that Christianity is the only religion that makes such a claim.** Pascal's wager assumes that Christianity is the *only* religion which claims that a person will be judged and punished by God for not believing in him (that is, not believing in that religion). In reality, Christianity is *not* the only religion which claims that God will judge and punish unbelievers. Many other religions—such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Daoism and many indigenous religions—also claim that God (or some deity) will judge and punish unbelievers.

So, if you claim that we should believe in Christianity (or in any other religion), just because of the possibility of being punished for not believing in it, then what are we going to say about other religions that make the same claim? And as a believer of a religion which makes such a claim, what do you think about their similar claims anyway?

For example, in the “Homer the Heretic”¹⁰² episode of the Simpsons, Homer stops going to church and decides to follow God in his own way: by watching TV, slobbering about and dancing in his underpants. Throughout the episode he justifies himself in a number of ways, such as:

- “What’s the big deal about going to some building every Sunday, I mean, isn’t God everywhere?”
- “Don’t you think the almighty has better things to worry about than where one little guy spends one measly hour of his week?”
- “And what if we’ve picked the wrong religion? Every week we’re just making God madder and madder?”

¹⁰¹ James was a pioneering American psychologist, philosopher, and leader of the philosophical movement of Pragmatism, who wrote influential books on the young science of psychology, educational psychology, the psychology of religious experience, and the philosophy of pragmatism. On James' role in Buddhist psychology, see **Consciousness and meditation** = SD 17.8c(2).

¹⁰² Epi 62, Prod code 9F01, orig airdate 8 Oct 1992, written by George Meyer & directed by Jim Reardon. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homer_the_Heretic.

We do not need subtle philosophical arguments to understand the import of such statements. These are very simple facts of life, and as such they can be simply stated by even Homer!

- (6) **There are opportunity costs.** Pascal's wager fails to mention any cost (disadvantages) relating to belief. Philosophers have proposed that there may be both direct costs (time, health, wealth) and opportunity costs.¹⁰³ Most modern religions require their followers to spend time attending religious services at houses of worship and to donate money for the maintenance of such places and/or to the needy, when possible. As a result, if a person believes in a God that does not exist, then that person has lost time, money and chance that could have been used for some other purpose.

There may be opportunity costs for those who choose to believe in a religion. For example, scientific understanding, such as the theory of evolution, that seems to some to contradict scripture, could enable a non-believer to discover or accomplish things a creationist could not. It is also argued that belief incurs a cost by not allowing the believer to participate in and enjoy actions forbidden by religious rules and dogmas. Many religious followers make significant (but not necessarily wise) sacrifices for their beliefs. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses reject blood transfusions, even if it may cost their lives or those of their loved ones.

- (7) **Measure theory.** Pascal's wager assumes that God is possible, and hence there is a non-zero probability of him existing. But this does not work all the time. It is not clear what is meant when "probability" or "chance" is said in the context of something possibly existing, but probability cannot be used as defined in mathematics to justify the wager as it is, since God being possible does not mean that God's existence has positive probability.¹⁰⁴

The most important fallacy or weakness to note in Pascal's wager is that it takes a very speculative ("as if") approach to the God-idea. The Buddha, in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta, however, does not in any way advocate a speculative notion of karma and rebirth. It is obvious that Pascal's wager is based on a "power mode," in fact, a threat with a clear agenda: believe in God, or God will punish you. The mature and clear logic of the four self-assurances reflects the "love mode" of a thinker's faith. Otherwise, any comparison between the two is at best academic and speculative. Furthermore, one might assert that if Buddhism were false, it is of no consequence, but if Buddhism is true, the implication is universal.¹⁰⁵

— — —

¹⁰³ In economics, **opportunity cost** or **economic cost**, is *the cost of something in terms of an opportunity forgone* (and the benefits that could be derived from that opportunity), or *the most valuable forgone alternative*, ie the second best alternative. For example, if the local town council decides to build a shopping mall on a piece of vacant land that it owns, the opportunity cost is *some other thing* that could have been done with that land and the construction funds. In building the mall, the town council has forgone the opportunity to build, say, a parking lot on that land, or a recreation centre, or to sell the land to reduce the council's debt, and so on. Opportunity cost need not be assessed in monetary terms, but in terms of *anything* that is of value to the person or persons doing the assessing. For example, a person who chooses to meditate would not be able to use that time watching TV. In any case, if he chooses to watch a TV show, he would only be able to watch one show at a time, and (even if he is recording another show) he can only watch either one at a time, foregoing the other one. Whichever one he chooses entails a lost opportunity to experience the other.

¹⁰⁴ This is a summary of a technical argument. I am not very familiar with measure theory, for which see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pascal's_Wager#Measure_theory, and other refs there.

¹⁰⁵ On how to fully benefit from the 4 self-assurances, see Comy 15b-16.

The Discourse to the Kesa,puttiyas

(A 3.65 = 1:188-193)

[An asterisk (*) following a word or phrase refers to an endnote.]

[188] **1** Thus have I heard.

The Kālāmas approach the Buddha

1a At one time, the Blessed One was wandering in Kosala with a large community of monks and they arrived at a market town of the Kālāmas* named Kesa,putta.*

1b Now the Kālāmas of Kesa,putta heard (this):

“It is said that the recluse Gotama,* the Sakya son, who went forth from a Sakyan family, has arrived in Kesa,putta.”

1c Now a good report about that Master Gotama has been going around thus:*

“The Blessed One is an arhat, fully self-awakened, accomplished in wisdom and conduct, well-farer, knower of worlds, peerless guide of tamable people, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.

Having realized by his own direct knowledge this world with its gods, its Māras and its Brahmās, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people, he makes it known to others.

He teaches the Dharma, good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, both in the spirit and in the letter.

He proclaims the holy life that is entirely complete and pure.

1d It is good to see such arhats.”*

1e Then the Kālāmas of Kesa,putta approached the Blessed One.

Some greeted him with lotus-palms; some exchanged greetings and cordial talk with him; some announced their name and clan before the Blessed One—and then sat down at one side. Some kept silent and sat down at one side.

1f When the Kālāmas of Kesa,putta were all seated, they spoke thus to the Blessed One:

2 **“Bhante, there are some recluses and brahmins who come to Kesa,putta. They expound and explain their own doctrines, but attack, revile, despise and reject the doctrines of others.*

And then some recluses and brahmins come to Kesa,putta [189] and they, too, expound and explain their own doctrines, but attack, revile, despise and reject the doctrines of others.

Bhante, we are uncertain and in doubt: Which of these good recluses speak truth and which speak falsehood?”

The ten doubtful points

3a “It is fitting that you are uncertain, that you doubt, Kālāmas. Doubt has arisen in you over what is doubtful.

THE 10 DOUBTFUL POINTS.* Come Kālāmas:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) Do not go ¹⁰⁶ by oral tradition [received wisdom] | (<i>mā anussavena</i>).* |
| (2) Do not go by lineage [successive tradition] | (<i>mā paramparāya</i>).* |
| (3) Do not go by hearsay | (<i>mā iti,kirāya</i>).* |
| (4) Do not go by scriptural authority | (<i>mā piṭaka,sampadānena</i>).* |
| (5) Do not go by pure reason | (<i>mā takka,hetu[,gāhena]</i>).* |
| (6) Do not go by inference [by logic] | (<i>mā naya,hetu[,gāhena]</i>).* |
| (7) Do not go by reasoned thought [by specious reasoning] | (<i>mā ākāra,parivitakkena</i>).* |
| (8) Do not go by acceptance of [being convinced of]
a view after pondering on it | (<i>mā diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khantiyā</i>).* |

* Passages with an asterisk (*) have Commentarial Notes (see below).

¹⁰⁶ Comy interprets as *mā gaṇhiṭṭha*, “do not take hold of (a notion)” throughout (AA 2:305).

- (9) Do not go by (another’s) seeming ability (mā bhavya,rūpatāya).*
- (10) Do not go by the thought, ‘This recluse is our teacher.’ [‘This recluse is respected by us.’] (mā samaṇo no garū ti).*

Unwholesome roots

3b When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,*

‘These things are unwholesome. These things are blamable. These things are censured by the wise. These things, when undertaken and practised, bring about harm and suffering.’*

—Then Kālāmas, you should abandon them.

4 GREED. *What do you think, Kālāmas, when greed arises in a person, is it for his good or for his harm?”

“For his harm, bhante.”

This person, Kālāmas, who is greedy, overcome by greed, his mind controlled by it, will destroy life, take what is not given, violate the women of others,¹⁰⁷ and tell lies, and he will also make others to do likewise, which will bring about harm and suffering for a long time.”

“Yes, bhante.”

5 HATE. “What do you think, Kālāmas, when hatred arises in a person, is it for his good or for his harm?”

“For his harm, bhante.”

“This person, Kālāmas, who is hateful, overcome by hatred, his mind controlled by it, will destroy life, take what is not given, violate the women of others, and tell lies, and he will also make others to do likewise, which will bring about harm and suffering for a long time.”

“Yes, bhante.”

6 DELUSION. “What do you think, Kālāmas, when delusion arises in a person, is it for his good or for his harm?”

“For his harm, bhante.” [190]

“This person, Kālāmas, who is deluded, overcome by delusion, his mind controlled by it, will destroy life, take what is not given, violate the women of others, and tell lies, and he will also make others to do likewise, which will bring about harm and suffering for a long time.”

“Yes, bhante.”

7 EMPHATIC AFFIRMATION.* “What do you think, Kālāmas, are these things wholesome or unwholesome?”

“Unwholesome, bhante.”

“Blamable or not blamable?”

“Blamable, bhante.”

“Censured or praised by the wise?”

“Censured by the wise, bhante.”

“These things, when undertaken and practised, do they bring about harm and suffering?”

“These things, bhante, when undertaken and practised, bring about harm and suffering for a long time.”

So indeed it is to us in this matter.”

8 *“It is because of this, Kālāmas, that I say:

¹⁰⁷ Para,dāram pi gacchati, lit “go to the women of others, too.” It is likely that all those who have gone to see the Buddha at Kesa,putta are men, since elsewhere and more commonly, the third precept reads kāmesu micchācārā, “misconduct through sense-pleasures” (eg M 1:312), esp in the five precepts (pañca,sīla, D 1:146), which applies to all, regardless of gender.

‘Come Kālāmas:

Do not go by oral tradition [received wisdom].

Do not go by lineage [successive tradition].

Do not go by hearsay.

Do not go by scriptural authority.

Do not go by pure reason.

Do not go by inference [by logic].

Do not go by reasoned thought [by specious reasoning].

Do not go by acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it.

Do not go by (another’s) seeming ability.

Do not go by the thought, “This recluse is our teacher.” [“This recluse is respected by us.”]

When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,

“These things are unwholesome. These things are blamable. These things are censured by the wise. These things, when undertaken and practised, bring about harm and suffering.”

—Then Kālāmas, you should abandon them.

—So I have spoken; it is for this reason that I have spoken.

9a Come Kālāmas:¹⁰⁸

Do not go by oral tradition [received wisdom].

Do not go by lineage [successive tradition].

Do not go by hearsay.

Do not go by scriptural authority.

Do not go by pure reason.

Do not go by inference [by logic].

Do not go by reasoned thought [by specious reasoning].

Do not go by acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it.

Do not go by (another’s) seeming ability.

Do not go by the thought, ‘This recluse is our teacher.’ [‘This recluse is respected by us.’]

Wholesome roots

9b When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,

‘These things are wholesome. These things are not blamable. These things are praised by the wise.

These things, when undertaken and practised, bring good and happiness.’*

—Then Kālāmas, you should live cultivating them.

10 NON-GREED. What do you think, Kālāmas, this person, in whom non-greed [charity] arises, does it arise for his good or for his harm?”

“For his good, bhante.”

“This person, Kālāmas, who is not greedy, not overcome by greed, his thoughts not controlled by it, *will not destroy life, will not take what is not given, will not violate the women of others, and will not tell lies*, and he will also not make others to do likewise, [191] which will bring good and happiness for the long time.”

“Yes, bhante.”

11 NON-HATRED. “What do you think, Kālāmas, this person, in whom non-hatred [lovingkindness] arises, does it arise for his good or for his harm?”

“For his good, bhante.”

¹⁰⁸ Note that the “doubtworthy points” passage is repeated only here (for the unwholesome roots), but not after the statement of the wholesome roots [§14], where it is merely stated once. This clearly shows these doubtful points are related to the unwholesome roots and as such should be rejected.

“What do you think, Kālāmas, this person, who is not hateful, not overcome by hatred, his mind not controlled by it, will not destroy life, will not take what is not given, will not violate the women of others, and will not tell lies, and he will also not make others to do likewise, which will bring good and happiness for the long time.”

“Yes, bhante.”

12 NON-DELUSION. “This person, Kālāmas, in whom non-delusion [wisdom] arises, does it arise for his good or for his harm?”

“For his good, bhante.”

“This person, Kālāmas, who is not deluded, not overcome by delusion, his mind not controlled by it, will not destroy life, will not take what is not given, will not violate the women of others, and will not tell lies, and he will also not make others to do likewise, which will bring good and happiness for the long time.”

“Yes, bhante.”

13 EMPHATIC AFFIRMATION. *”What do you think, Kālāmas, are these things wholesome or unwholesome?”

“Wholesome, bhante.”

“Blamable or not blamable?”

“Not blamable, bhante.”

“Censured or praised by the wise?”

“Praised by the wise, bhante.”

“These things, when undertaken and practised, do they bring good and happiness?”

“These things, bhante, when undertaken and practised, bring good and happiness.

So indeed it is to us in this matter.”

14 “It is because of this, Kālāmas, that I say:*

‘Come Kālāmas:

Do not go by oral tradition [received wisdom].

Do not go by lineage [successive tradition].

Do not go by hearsay.

Do not go by scriptural authority.

Do not go by pure reason.

Do not go by inference [by logic].

Do not go by reasoned thought [by specious reasoning].

Do not go by acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it.

Do not go by (another’s) seeming ability.

Do not go by the thought, “This recluse is our teacher.” [“This recluse is respected by us.”]

When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,

‘*These things are wholesome. These things are not blamable. These things are praised by the wise.*

These things, when undertaken and practised, bring good and happiness.’

—Then Kālāmas, you should live [192] cultivating them.

—So I have spoken; it is for this reason that I have spoken.

The divine abodes*

15a (1) Lovingkindness. Now, Kālāmas, that noble disciple—thus free from covetousness, free from ill will, unconfused, fully aware, mindful¹⁰⁹*—dwells pervading one quarter with a mind of loving-kindness: likewise the second quarter, the third quarter and the fourth quarter.

¹⁰⁹ *Evam vigatābhijjho vigatāvypādo asammūlho sampajāno paṭissato.* This describes the saint’s mind; cf description of the ordinary mind at §15b etc.

Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself,¹¹⁰ he dwells pervading the whole world with lovingkindness that is vast, great, boundless, free from enmity, free from ill will.*

(2) Compassion. Now, Kālāmas, that noble disciple— thus free from covetousness, free from ill will, unconfused, fully aware, mindful—dwells pervading one quarter with a mind of compassion: likewise the second quarter, the third quarter and the fourth quarter.

Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells pervading the whole world with compassion that is vast, great, boundless, free from enmity, free from ill will.

(3) Altruistic joy. Now, Kālāmas, that noble disciple— thus free from covetousness, free from ill will, unconfused, fully aware, mindful—dwells pervading one quarter with a mind of altruistic joy: likewise the second quarter, the third quarter and the fourth quarter.

Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells pervading the whole world with altruistic joy that is vast, great, boundless, free from enmity, free from ill will.

(4) Equanimity. Now, Kālāmas, that noble disciple—thus free from covetousness, free from ill will, unconfused, fully aware, mindful—dwells pervading one quarter with a mind of equanimity: likewise the second quarter, the third quarter and the fourth quarter.

Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells pervading the whole world with equanimity that is vast, great, boundless, free from enmity, free from ill will.¹¹¹

The four self-assurances

15b Kālāmas, this noble disciple—his mind without enmity thus, without ill will thus, uncorrupted thus, purified thus¹¹²—wins these four self-assurances right here in this life:*

16* (1) The 1st self-assurance [The first self-assurance he has won is this:]

‘If there is an afterlife, and if good and evil deeds bear fruit and results, it is possible that when the body breaks up, after death, I shall re-appear in a state of joy, a happy destination, in heaven.’

This is the first self-assurance he has won.

(2) The 2nd self-assurance [The second self-assurance he has won is this:]

‘If there is *no* afterlife, and if good and evil deeds do not bear fruit and results, still right here in this life, free from enmity, from ill will, I live happily.’

This is the second self-assurance he has won.

(3) The 3rd self-assurance [The third self-assurance he has won is this:]

‘Suppose evil does come to the evil-doer: but how can I—who intends no evil towards anyone, who has done no evil—be touched by suffering?’

This is the third self-assurance he has won.

(4) The 4th self-assurance [The fourth self-assurance he has won is this:]

‘Suppose evil does *not* come to the evil-doer: then, right here in this life, I see myself purified both ways.’¹¹³

This is the fourth self-assurance he has won.

Kālāmas, this noble—his mind without enmity thus, without ill will thus, uncorrupted thus, purified thus—wins these four self-assurances right here in this life.’’

The Kālāmas’ exultation*

17 “So it is, bhante! So it is, well-farer!

¹¹⁰ *Iti uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabb’attatāya*. This underscored word is a better reading than *sabbattatāya* (PED “on the whole”) since *sabbadhi* (“everywhere”) precedes it. It is resolved as *sabba* + *atta* + the suffix *-tā* (making it an abstract noun), giving the sense of “all-and-self-ness.” The word *sabbattatāya* is dative, giving the sense, “to all-and-selfness,” or as **Bodhi** translates it: “to all as to himself” (2005:90).

¹¹¹ On how this practice can lead to spiritual liberation, see **Brahma, vihāra S** (A 10.208/5:299) = SD 2.10.

¹¹² *Evam avera, citto evaṃ avyāpajja, citto evaṃ asaṅkhilīṭṭha, citto evaṃ visuddha, citto*. This describes the ordinary mind; cf description of the saint’s mind at §15a.

¹¹³ Because he does no evil and so no evil will come to him. (Comy)

Indeed, bhante, this noble disciple—his mind without enmity thus, without ill will thus, uncorrupted thus, purified thus—wins [193] these four self-assurances right here in this life:

(1) The first self-assurance he has won is this:

‘If there is an afterlife, and if good and evil deeds bear fruit and results, it is possible that when the body breaks up, after death, I shall re-appear in a state of joy, a happy destination, in heaven.’

This is the first self-assurance he has won.

(2) The second self-assurance he has won is this:

‘If there is no afterlife, and if good and evil deeds do not bear fruit and results, still right here in this life, free from enmity, from ill will, I live happily.’

This is the second self-assurance he has won.

(3) The third self-assurance he has won is this:

‘Suppose evil does come to the evil-doer: but how can I—who intends no evil towards anyone, who has done no evil—be touched by suffering?’

This is the third self-assurance he has won.

(4) The fourth self-assurance he has won is this:

‘Suppose evil does not come to the evil-doer: then, right here in this life, I see myself purified both ways.’

This is the fourth self-assurance he has won.

Indeed, bhante, this noble—his mind without enmity thus, without ill will thus, uncorrupted thus, purified thus—wins these four self-assurances right here in this life.

The Kālāmas go for refuge*

18 Excellent, master¹¹⁴ Gotama! Excellent, master Gotama! Just as if, master Gotama, 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 master Gotama has, in numerous ways, made the Dharma clear.

We to to master Gotama for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks.

May master Gotama remember us as lay followers who have gone to him for refuge from this day forth for life.”

— evaṃ —

¹¹⁴ Throughout this refuge-going passage, the Kālāmas address the Buddhas as *bho*, a common vocative used amongst brahmins, while throughout the rest of the discourse, they address the Buddha as *bhante*. Three explanations are possible: (1) Originally, *bhante* and *bho* are synonymous. (2) The reciters who composed this Sutta use the standard Buddhist vocation in its main body, but left the refuge-going passage with its own brahminical vocative. (3) The refuge as a formula or ritual for brahmins would, as a rule, use *bho* as the vocative.

Commentarial Notes

1a The Kālāmas of Kesaputta

The Kesa,puttiyas were the people of Kesaputta: they were better known as Kālāma (A 1:188). It has been suggested that they may be identical with the Kesins of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas.¹¹⁵ **Kālāma** is probably the name of a clan (*gotta*; Skt *gotra*). **Kesa,putta**¹¹⁶ is a market town (*nigama*) in Kosala is mentioned as belonging to the Kālāmas, who were kshatriyas (AA 2:304). Among the well known members of this clan are the ascetic Bharañḍu Kālāma (A 3.124),¹¹⁷ and Alāra Kālāma, the teacher of Gotama before his awakening. Both Bharañḍu and the recluse Gotama have lived together as pupils of Ālāra.¹¹⁸

The Bharañḍu Sutta (A 3.124) records the Buddha as instructing Mahānāma on three kinds of teachers: the first teaches the full comprehension of sense-desires, but neither of sense-objects nor feelings; the second teaches the full comprehension of both sense-desires and sense-objects, but not of feelings; but the third teaches the full comprehension of all three. The Buddha asks Mahānāma whether their accomplishment (*niṭṭha*) is one and the same (*eka*) or different (*puṭhu*).¹¹⁹ Bharañḍu tells Mahānāma to answer that they are one and the same: thrice he does this, and thrice the Buddha answers that they are all different. Taking this as a snub by the Buddha, Bharañḍu leaves, not to return any more.¹²⁰

1b “It is said that the recluse Gotama...”

This is a stock passage to show that the Kālāmas are well acquainted with the Buddha’s background. This paragraph denotes the Buddha’s social status (in the minds of the Kālāmas and the world), which adds a significant sense of charisma to his personality.

1c Now a good report about that Master Gotama...

This section declares the presence of the Three Jewels in the world.

Paragraph 1, beginning “**The Blessed One is an arhat...**,” is the traditional verse for the recollection of the Buddha (*Buddhānussati*) in his nine virtues,¹²¹ and reflects the spiritual status of the Buddha to the world.

Paragraph 2, beginning “**Having realized by his own direct knowledge...**,” is a statement of the Buddha’s self-awakening and that he is a world-teacher, capable of liberating all beings through earth and heaven.

Paragraph 3, beginning “**He teaches the Dharma...**,” is a brief description of the Dharma. The full verse on the recollection of the Dharma in its six virtues runs thus:¹²²

- (1) Well taught (*svākkhāto*) is the Dharma;
- (2) it is visible here and now (*sandiṭṭhika*), sometimes rendered as “to be seen for oneself”;
- (3) it has an immediate effect (*akālika*);
- (4) it invites and entails personal verification (*ehi,passika*);
- (5) it is accessible (*opanayika*); alternately, it “brings on progress”;
- (6) it is to be personally realized by the wise (*paccattam veditabbo viññūhi*).

¹¹⁵ BC Law, *Geography of Early Buddhism*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Repr Delhi: Oriental Books, 1979. 1932:30 n; Chaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, 2nd ed Calcutta, 1950:118.

¹¹⁶ Be has *Kesa,mutta* throughout: see Be:VRI 1:216-222.

¹¹⁷ A 3.124/1:276-278.

¹¹⁸ **Bharañḍu S** (A 3.124.2/1:277; AA 2:375).

¹¹⁹ A 3.124/1:276-278; AA 2:374 f.

¹²⁰ A 3.124/1:2376-278.

¹²¹ See *Buddhānussati* = SD 15.7.

¹²² D 2:92 (Vism 216); M 27.11/1:179 = 38.31/1:267; A 1:156 (see AA), 227 (AA); Sn 567 (SnA) = M 92 (MA), Sn 1137 (Nc, NdA, SnA); S 2:58 = 4:328. For a traditional copy, see Vism 7.69-75/213-215. See *Dhammānussati* = SD 15.9.

The phrase, “**good in the beginning,**” refers to the moral virtue aspect (*sīla-k,khandha*) of the Teaching, and is essentially stated as in the first virtue, “well taught.”

The phrase, “**good in the middle,**” refers to the mental cultivation aspect (*samādhi-k,khandha*) of the Teaching, which is represented by virtues 2-3:

- (2) mental cultivation and mindfulness make one sees the Dharma in this life itself;
- (3) the benefits of mental training are immediate, and also allows one to have an experience of the timelessness of reality;

The phrase, “**good in the end,**” refers to the wisdom aspect (*pañña-k,khandha*) of the Teaching, which is represented by virtues 4-6:

- (4) the Dharma is meant to be tried and tested, like food for the hungry or medicine for the ill, which represents the first stage of Buddhist training or discipleship: this is the level of the “good worldling”;
- (5) the Dharma immediately becomes “accessible,” that is, one begins to understand it, so that it “brings on progress” on the spiritual path: in this life itself, one will attain at least stream-winning, if not arhathood; and
- (6) the Dharma can fully awaken one so that one reaches the highest spiritual state, that of the arhats, the truly wise ones.

The phrase, “**both in the spirit and in the letter**” refers to the two aspects of the teachings as idea and as form. Traditionally, this is explained as follows in **the Visuddhi,magga**:

It is (well-taught) “in the spirit” (*sâttham*) because it is perfect (*sampatti*) in meaning, and it is (well-taught) “in the letter” (*savyañjanam*) because it is perfect in the details.

It is (well-taught) “in the spirit” because it conforms to the words declaring its meaning by way of explanation, proclamation, revelation, analysis and clarification. It is (well-taught) “in the letter” because it is perfect by way of syllable, word, the letter, style, language and exposition.

(Vism 7.72/214)

The spirit (*attha*) of the teaching is preserved through personal practice, especially through proper instructions from accomplished teachers and from personal realization. The word or letter (*pada*) of the teaching refers to the oral tradition, that is, the phrasing (*vyañjana*) and sound (*ghosa*) of the teaching, and to the written texts properly recorded, preserved and transmitted.

Those who are quick in understanding and realizing the True Teaching are able to grasp its spirit, that is, its meaning directly. Those who begin their spiritual training with the letter of the Teaching take a more gradual path, through three stages:

- (1) hearing the Teaching on the word level (*suta,mayā paññā*),
- (2) reflecting over the Teaching (*cinta,mayā paññā*), and
- (3) cultivating a direct experience of reality (*bhāvanā,mayā paññā*). (D 3:219; Vbh 324) [3.2]

1d “It is good to see such arhats.”

1 THE BENEFIT OF SEEING RECLUSES. Since the only means of Dharma transmission in the Buddha’s time is that of the oral tradition, one has to be in the presence (*santike*) of the Teacher and within sight (*dassana*) of him, in order to benefit from the Teaching. However, even when the listener is still unable to immediately understand the teacher’s word, the frequent, patient and responsive way of listening would in due course bring liberating wisdom upon one. This is clearly stated in the ninth stanza of **the Maṅgala Sutta** (Kh 5.9 = Sn 266):

*khantī ca sovaccasatā
samaṇānañ ca dassanañ
kālena dhamma,sākaicchā
etaṃ maṅgalaṃ uttamam*

Patience, being tractable [being responsive to instruction],
Seeing the recluses [especially left-home practitioners],
And timely Dharma discussions—
This is the highest blessing.

I have translated the abstract noun *dassana*¹²³ (Skt *darśana*), “seeing, sight, vision” as “**darshan**,”¹²⁴ a loan word from modern Hindi. This shows the importance and popularity of the practice of viewing holy persons such as the Buddha. I have used the modern Indian word “darshan” to reflect the original cultural and religious background that applies here. The ancient Indians who come to “see” the Buddha, do just that: they regard this mere gazing on a holy person to bring upon them great blessing, and also to be in the sight of a holy person is just as blessed.¹²⁵

The Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta contains two important passages relating to *dassana* as “seeing” a holy person, and where we can tease out a good understanding of the Buddha’s teaching regarding it. The first passage is **the Upavāṇa episode** (D 16.5.4 f) where the Buddha abruptly instructs Upavāṇa, who is fanning him, to step aside. When asked by Ānanda, the Buddha replies that numerous devatas (heavenly beings) have assembled “for the sight of the Tathāgata” (D 16.5.5). The more worldly devatas lament: “Too soon will the Eye in the world disappear!” The second passage concerns the four holy places, of which the Buddha declares: “Ānanda, there are these four places that should be seen by the faithful son of family so as to rouse samvega [a sense of urgency].” (D 16.5.8a)¹²⁶

2 THE BENEFIT OF FAITH. The statement, “It is good to see such arhats” (*sādhū kho pana tathā-rūpānaṃ arahataṃ dassanaṃ hoti ti*), clearly attests to the faith (*saddhā*) of those (or most of those) who have approached the Buddha. **Faith** is an effective beginning of the spiritual path. The Kālāmas have, in fact, been *suffering* from doubt and confusion on account of the claims and counter-claims of the various religious teachers and speakers who visit them. This suffering leads them to see the Buddha, in whose teaching their *faith* arises. **The Upanisā Sutta** (S 12.23) actually declares that suffering leads to faith and on to arhathood in this manner:¹²⁷

Ignorance ↔ **Suffering** → faith → gladness → zest → tranquillity → happiness → concentration
→ knowledge and vision → revulsion → dispassion → liberation → the destruction of mental
cankers (arhathood).¹²⁸

In the case of the Kālāmas, they or a significant number of them apparently accepted the Buddha’s teachings after pondering on them (*dharmā nijjhānaṃ khamanti*) and as a result become stream-winners, as suggested by their going for refuge at the end of the discourse (as in the case of Bhaddiya in a similar discourse).¹²⁹ Their process of spiritual awakening forms a part of “the gradual training” (*anupubba-sikkhā*) of **the Kīṭāgiri Sutta** (M 70), that is, up to stage (8), thus.¹³⁰

¹²³ It comes from the verb *dassati* = *dakkhati*, *dakkhiti*, “he sees.” The word *dassana* appears a total of at least 12 times in **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16), all in ch 5 (§§5.7 (x2), 5.15 (x5), 5.19, 5.20, 5.24, 5.24, 5.25), the Kusinārā Chapter: see SD 9 Introd 7e(i).

¹²⁴ Webster’s 3rd International Dictionary on **darshan**: “a blessing held by various Hindus to consist in the viewing of an eminent person (as a religious leader).” See Trainor 1997:177 f & McMahan 1998:10 (digital).

¹²⁵ See *Pratyupanna-Buddha-Saṃmukha, vasthita-samādhi Sūtra* (tr Harrison, 1990) §14H. Lawrence Babb, “Glancing: Visual interaction in Hinduism,” 1981:396 f, has shown that Hindus not only wish to see their deities, but also wish to be seen by them.

¹²⁶ For a useful discussion, see Kevin Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism*, 1997:174-176.

¹²⁷ S 12.23/2:29-32 = SD 6.12 & **Dependent Arising** = SD 5.16 (18C).

¹²⁸ On mental cankers (*āsava*), see Intro 5.3(1).

¹²⁹ **Bhaddiya S** (A 4.193/2:190-194) = SD 35.10 contains the same 10 doubtful points & the section on the roots (§§3b-15a). Comy says that at the end of the discourse, Bhaddiya becomes a stream-winner. (AA 3:173)

¹³⁰ This sequence is from **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70), but the terms are from **Caṅkī S** (M 95). See foll n.

- (1) Faith (*saddhā*) conduces one to visit (that is, to see) a teacher.
- (2) Visiting (*upasaṅkamana*) the teacher conduces one to respectfully attending to the teacher.
- (3) Respectfully attending (*payirūpāsana*) to the teacher conduces to giving ear.
- (4) Giving ear (*sota,vadhāna*) conduces to hearing the Dharma.
- (5) Hearing the Dharma (*dhamma,savana*) conduces to remembering the Dharma.
- (6) Remembering the Dharma (*dhamma,dhāraṇā*) conduces to the examination of its meaning.
- (7) The examination of the meaning (*atth'upaparikkhā*) of the teachings helps one to accept it after pondering on it.
- (8) Being convinced of the teachings after pondering on it (*dhammā nijjhānaṃ khamantī*)¹³¹ conduces to will-power [wholesome desire].
- (9) Will-power (*chanda*) conduces to effort.
- (10) Effort (*ussāha*) conduces to scrutiny.
- (11) Scrutiny [deliberating] (*tulanā*) conduces to striving.
- (12) Striving on (*pahitatta*), he realizes through his own body the supreme truth and sees it by penetrating it with wisdom [arhathood].¹³² (M 70.23-24/1:480) = SD 11.1

The Caṅkī Sutta (D 95), too, mentions these twelve-stage gradual progress—but in reverse—and which it says leads to “the final attainment of truth” (*saccānupatti*), that is, arhathood.¹³³

This exhortation is effectively a “psychology of learning” in a few lines. The learning process is not just a matter of rote or book-learning, but of spiritual friendship with the teacher (1-4), which in turn is a fertile ground for learning (5-8), which leads to efforts in spiritual change (9-12) and realization. We also see here a more elaborate exposition of **the Maṅgala Sutta** quatrain on the four qualities beginning with patience (Kh 5.9 = Sn 266) mentioned above.

It is interesting to see here how “being convinced of the teachings after pondering on them” (*dhammā nijjhānaṃ khamantī*) gives the positive counterpart of the doubtful point known as *diṭṭhi,nijjhāna,-khanti* [Comy 3a(8)]. Here we see the proper context where pondering (through wise attention) on a teaching as a spiritual exercise, and is not a cursory or biased acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after some thought [Intro 5.3].

2 “Bhante, there are some recluses and brahmins...we are uncertain and in doubt: Which of these good recluses speak truth and which speak falsehood?”

According to the Āṅguttara Commentary, the town of Kesa,putta is located at the edge of a forest. Various groups of wanderers would stop there to spend the night before crossing the forest (or on emerging from the forest). During their stay, they would give talks to the Kālāmas, so that they are exposed to a wide range of religious and philosophical ideas (AA 2:305). Understandably, such a bewildering range of views causes doubt and perplexity in the minds of the Kālāmas.

3a The ten doubtful points

The passage does not have any verb at all, but which is supplied by the Sutta Commentary as *mā gaṇhīṭṭha*, “do not take hold of (a notion)” (AA 2:305). A number of translators have rendered this idiomatically as “do not go by...” rather than being literal, technical or prolix, with such renditions as “Do not accept anything through...” or “Do not hold on to a notion on account...,” although these may serve as explanations or amplified translations.

¹³¹ The phrasing here shows or suggests how *dhamma,nijjhāna,khanti* should be resolved, ie with *dhammā* as pl.

¹³² Be Ee: *Pahitatto samāno kāyena c'eva paramaṃ saccaṃ sacchikaroti, paññāya ca naṃ aṭivijjha passati*. Here, **Caṅkī S** (M 95) has: “Striving (*padhāna*) conduces to the final attainment of truth (*saccānupatti*).” M 95.21/-2:173 f = SD 21.15. Both passages mean the same thing. Comy on Caṅkī S says that *saccānubodha* means “awakening to the path” (*maggānubodha*), and *saccānupatti* means “realization of the fruit” (*phala,sacchikiriyā*) (MA 3:427).

¹³³ M 95.21-33/2:174-176 = SD 21.15.

3a (1) “Do not go by oral tradition [received wisdom]” (*mā anussavena*)

In the Buddha’s time, there were two predominant groups of religious thinking: the established Vedic system of the brahmins (*brāhmaṇa*) and the reform movement. The traditional brahmins claim that their religion has originated with the primal being (*puruṣa*) and was handed down orally and exclusively through successive generations of brahmins. Their system was mostly text-centred and ritual-based. The reform movement, on the other hand, consisted mainly of recluses (Skt *śramaṇa*; P *samaṇa*) who, like the Buddha, base their teachings on personal realization through mental cultivation and reinterpreted religiosity as an inner experience, attainable through personal effort, that is, without the mediation of brahmins (as held by the brahmins). A good case in point is that of *karma*, which according to the brahmins meant rituals and sacraments, of which only the brahmins had the power and privilege to perform, while the Buddhists and Jains regard it as *volitional action* for which one is morally accountable.¹³⁴ The reform movement, however, also included non-religious groups such as the materialists (eg the Cārvāka).

Modern scholars, such as Jayatilleke,¹³⁵ generally agree that *anussava* here probably refers to the “sacred Vedic tradition,” that is, the brahminical oral tradition. In rejecting *anussava* as a valid means of knowledge, the Buddha directly challenges the religious authority of the brahmins. Of course, this doubtful point of *anussava* is not merely limited the brahminical tradition, but also to all forms of traditional authority.

The **Sandaka Sutta** (M 76) throws more light on why *anussava* is not a satisfactory means of knowledge. In the Sutta, Ānanda explains that a teacher who is a traditionalist (*anussavika*) may uphold a teaching that is “traditionally handed down” (*itiha, itiha, paramparā*), taking it to be “scriptural authority” (*piṭaka, sampadā*). However traditional or “authoritative” a traditionalist teaching may be, one that is based on *anussava* must have the following possibilities:

it might be well-remembered	(<i>sussatam pi hoti</i>);
it might be ill-remembered	(<i>dussatam pi hoti</i>);
it might be true	(<i>tathā pi hoti</i>); or
it might be false	(<i>aññathā pi hoti</i>).

Seeing that such a traditionalist religion based on *anussava* is unsatisfactory (*anassāsika*), an intelligent person, becoming disillusioned with it, would leave.¹³⁶

In our own times, this doubtful point applies to our traditional religions and customs. Many of the traditions, customs and practices we see during the rites of passages—especially those of birth, marriage and death—have been handed down from our collective past. Some of these practices, such as new year home-gatherings and communal fellowship, have a healthy socializing value. Practices that are superstitious, alienating, wasteful or exploitative should be rejected or modified into something relevant to our personal and social development.

3a (2) “Do not go by lineage [successive tradition]” (*mā paramparāya*)

The Pali word *paramparā* simply means a “series or succession” (PED) and can refer to either teachers, or to teachings, or both. In the former case, *paramparā* of teachers, we have the Buddha comparing the lineage of Vedic teachers to “a close line of blind men, clinging together, of whom the front end sees

¹³⁴ It should be noted here that the Buddha does not import wholesale the notions of karma and rebirth from pre-Buddhist systems. For one, they are still not full developed systems during his time, and, moreover, where uses the conventions and terms of the day, we always gives them a new meaning and application. See Jayatilleke 1963:369-376.

¹³⁵ Jayatilleke 1963:171-178.

¹³⁶ *So anassāsikam idaṃ brahma, cariyā ti iti veditvā tasmā brahma, cariyā nibbijja pakkamati* (M 76.28/1:520) = SD 35.7. See also Jayatilleke 1963:185-187.

not, the middle section sees not, and the tail end sees not, too” (*andha,veṇi,paramparaṃ saṃsattā puri-mo’pi na passati majjhimo ‘pi na passati pacchimo ‘pi na passati*, D 1:239; M 2:170).¹³⁷

Paramparā can also refer to an “unbroken line of the teaching,” as in the phrase, *itiha,itiha,param-parā* (Skt *aitihya,pāramparya*),¹³⁸ “a teaching successively handed down.” In either case, the continuity of teacher or teachings, or of both—as in the case of the Chan and Zen traditions—are regarded as the authenticity and authoritativeness. However, as Jayatilleke notes:

Today, it may appear strange as to why anyone should accept an assertion merely because it is in a tradition. But in the context of Ancient India, we must not forget that the antiquity of a continuous tradition was itself a criterion in favour of its acceptance. This was probably the reason why the Jains and later even the Buddhists vied with each other in claiming the antiquity of their respective traditions over all others.
(Jayatilleke 1963:195 §296)

3a (3) “Do not go by hearsay” (*mā iti,kirāya*)

Iti,kirā (f)¹³⁹ is a common expression simply meaning “hearsay” (PED). There is variant reading, *iti,-kiriya*, which is sometimes preferred by the editors (eg Poussin and Thomas) to *iti,kirāya* (Nm 400, ed Poussin & Thomas).¹⁴⁰ However, as Jayatilleke has pointed out:

The Niddesa represents a later stratum within the Canon itself, as it is a commentary on two sections of the Suttanipāta and the form *itikiriya* is either due to an attempt to “correct” *itikirāya* on the misunderstanding that the nominal base is *itikiriya-* or is the result of an attempt to form an abstract noun, viz **itikirya-* > *itikiriya-* which by contamination with *kiriya* gives *itikiriya* for the instrumental case. The earlier form *itikirāya* is certainly to be preferred as the more authentic reading.
(Jayatilleke 1963:195 §297)

While the Kesa,puttiya Sutta has the reading *mā iti,kirāya mā piṭaka,sampadena* [§3a], we find *itihī-tiha* (vl *itih’itiha*) in **the Sandaka Sutta** (M 76.24-26) and **the Caṅkī Sutta** (M 95.12 f): *itihītiha param-parāya piṭaka,sampadāya*.¹⁴¹ Both *iti,kira* and *itihītiha* (and its variants) have essentially the same sense of “hearsay.” *Itihītiha* is formed from the base, the particle *iti*, and the particles *-ha* and *-kira*, both of which are used in introducing reports or anecdotal material. *Itiha* often occurs as a conjunction translated as “in this way” or “thinking or considering thus,” as in **the Ariya,pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26.19).¹⁴² Sometimes it is found in the suttas as introducing traditional history (D 1:1; M 1:151), or introducing a legendary account (M 1:311).

There is the negative form *anītiha* or *anitiha*, meaning “not based on hearsay or tradition,” which is really the negative form not of *itiha* but of *itihītiha*. In **the Brahma,cariya Sutta** (A 4.25), it is said that “the Blessed One has taught a holy life not based on hearsay or tradition” (*brahma,cariyaṃ anītihaṃ... adesayi so bhagavā*).¹⁴³ The elder **Girimānanda** is said to have realized for himself “the Dharma that is *anītiha*” (*dhammo anītiho*, Tha 331). **The Mettagū Māṇava Pucchā** (Sn 5.5) records this statement:

*Kittayissāmi te dhammaṃ (Mettaḡu ti bhagavā)
diṭṭhe dhamme anītihaṃ
yaṃ viditvā sato caraṃ tare loke visattikaṃ.*

¹³⁷ **Tevijja S** (D 13.15/1:239 f) = SD 1.8; **Caṅkī S** (M 95.13/2:170) = SD 21.15.

¹³⁸ See *aitihya,pārampariyayā*, *Vṛtti* on Pāṇini 5.4.23; *upadeśa,pāramparye aitihyam*, Böhtlingk, *Pāṇini’s acht Bücher Grammaticher Regeln*, Band I, 1839:342.

¹³⁹ Nm 360, 400, 482; Nc 108)

¹⁴⁰ Cf Nc 108, ed Stede.

¹⁴¹ M 76.24-26/1:520 = SD 35.7; M 95.12-13/2:169 = SD 21.15. See Jayatilleke 1963:193-199.

¹⁴² M 26.19/1:168 = SD 1.11.

¹⁴³ A 4.25/2:26.

(Mettagū, said the Blessed One,) I will proclaim a teaching
For the here and how, not based on hearsay or tradition,
Having known which, living mindfully, one would cross over attachment in the world. (Sn 1053)

It is possible (albeit without internal evidence) that *iti,kira* (at least in the Buddha’s time) has the same meaning as *itiha* [Intro 4.3]. Its Sanskrit form *aitihya* probably refers to “all the Vedic branches of study from *itihāsa* onwards” (Jayatilleke 1963:197). The suttas, for example, always speaks of “*itihāsa* as the fifth (item of Vedic studies)” (*itihāsa,pañcamam*).¹⁴⁴ As such, we may surmise that this doubtful point—that of *iti,kira*—is

directed at the validity of the legendary and historical material as well as the speculative theories of the Brāhmaṇās, Āraṇyakas and possibly the Early Upaniṣads, all of which were probably classified under *aitihya* in the Brāhmaṇical tradition at this time.” (Jayatilleke 1963:198)

In our own times, we can take *iti,kira* to refer to popular opinion or general consensus. Now that we have some idea of the ancient context and modern application of this doubtful point, we can “recontextualize” it by applying it to indigenous and modern legends, histories, and traditions, as well as various speculative notions (religious and otherwise). This means that we should not blindly believe the mass media, the Internet, advertisements, sales talk evangelism, and gossips—but to take them with a grain of salt, and if possible to personally find out for oneself what the real truth is. Waking life is a series of narratives, most of which seems to have lives of their own and are not really what they appear to be. Liberation lies in the ability to see through these narratives for what they really are.

3a (4) “Do not go by scriptural authority” (*mā piṭaka,sampadānena*)

1 MEANING OF PITAKA. The word *piṭaka* literally means “basket,” and figuratively refers to the three main collection of the Pali Canon. However, this latter sense is not found in the Canon itself, but became current only around the Indian emperor Asoka’s time (that is, around two centuries after the Buddha). As used in the early suttas, the word *piṭaka* simply means “scripture or canon.” In other words, *piṭaka* is never used in the Pali Canon to refer to the Buddha’s Teaching or to itself.

The phrase *piṭaka,sampadā* is fully translated as “the scriptural authority,” or more simply as “scripture.” While *sampadā* usually means “accomplishment, proficiency” (as in *sīla,sampada, paññā,sampadā*), Jayatilleke notes that

the word may perhaps denote a characteristic of *piṭaka* (*piṭakassa sampadā*) and mean lit[erally] “the worth of the *piṭaka* and therefore “the authority of the *piṭaka*.” (Jayatilleke 1963:200 §305)

We know from such discourses as **the Sandaka Sutta** (M 76.24-26) and **the Caṅkī Sutta** (M 95.12 f) that *piṭaka,sampadā* refers to the Vedic tradition.¹⁴⁵ The suttas occasionally refer to the Vedic mantras or hymns having been “put together” (*samihitam*),¹⁴⁶ and **the Sabhiya Sutta** (Sn 3.6) refers to “the Vedas of the recluses”:

<i>vedāni viceyya kevalāni (Sabhiyā ti bhagavā)</i>	Having fully examined every <u>branch of knowledge</u> , (O Sabhiya, said the Blessed One:)
<i>samaṇānaṃ yāni p’atthi brāhmaṇānaṃ sabbā,vedanāsu vīta,rāgo sabbam vedam aticca vedagu so.</i>	whatever there are of the recluses or the brahmins, with lust removed from all feelings, he is accomplished in all <u>knowledge</u> , a knowledge master. (Sn 529)

¹⁴⁴ **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3.1.3/1:88; **Tikaṇṇa S** (A 3.58/1:163), **Doṇa S** (A 5.192/3:223).

¹⁴⁵ M 76.24-26/1:520 = SD 35.7; M 95.12-13/2:169 = SD 21.15. See Jayatilleke 1963:193-199.

¹⁴⁶ **Tevijja S** (D 13.13/1:238) = SD 1.8; cf Skt *samhitā*, “collection.”

We know that none of the sacred texts (of any religious group) were ever written down in the Buddha's time and all teachings were orally transmitted. From such passages (Sn 529), it is also clear that the word *veda* does not necessarily refer only to the brahminical texts, but to any religious teacher's or group's oral collection of gnostic teachings. As such, we can conclude that *piṭaka* as a doubtful source of knowledge refers to the scripture and teachings of all non-Vedic teachers or systems, or even any religious scripture of the time.

2 PURPOSE OF THE DHARMA. In Buddhism, the Dharma is often referred to as a “path” (*magga*), which means that one has to walk on it towards a destination. In other words, the Dharma is a means of personal development and liberation. **The Alagaddûpama Sutta** (M 22) is an important discourse on the true purpose of religion: that the Dharma is to be properly used and not to be taken as good in itself. The Sutta contains two famous parables in this connection: the parables of the water-snake and of the raft.

In the *parable of the water-snake*, the Buddha warns against the misuse and abuse of the Dharma. “Without wisely examining the (true) purpose [or meaning] of those teachings with wisdom, they are not convinced of it [they fail to see its wisdom]” [Comy 3a(8)],¹⁴⁷ that is, they mistake the teachings purely as an intellectual exercise or for debating or even for showing off.

The *parable of the raft* points to the true nature of the Dharma as teaching. We make and use a raft simply to cross dangerous waters, and once we are safely on the other side, we have no more need for it. We are then reminded “to abandon even the Dharma, how much more that which is not Dharma!”¹⁴⁸ Even the Dharma has only *instrumental value*: its purpose is for bringing one to nirvana, which is of *intrinsic value* (good in itself).¹⁴⁹ Just as a careless water-snake catcher, wrongly grasping it by its coils or its tail instead of its head, is killed or greatly pained by being bitten by a water-snake, even so, those who “learn the Dharma only for the sake of criticizing others and for winning debates, do not enjoy the benefits for the sake of which one learns the Dharma. Those teachings, wrongly grasped by them, bring them harm and suffering for a long time to come.”¹⁵⁰

3. RELIGION IN OUR TIME. In our own time, there are two major categories of world religions and influential religious systems today, namely, the book religions and the non-book religions, or more specifically, the word-based systems¹⁵¹ and the truth-centred systems. Buddhism is an example of a non-book truth-centred system.¹⁵² The main book religions are the Abrahamic systems: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in their various sects and denominations, and also the Indian religions, such as Jainism, the various Hindu denominations, and Sikhism. Of the Chinese religions, Confucianism is an example of a book-centred system, although it is more of a socio-ethical system.

This categorization however is not so clear cut. In the Abrahamic system, for example, we have numerous groups that, although having high regard for their traditional scripture (the Torah, the Bible or

¹⁴⁷ D 22.10/1:133 = SD 3.13.

¹⁴⁸ *Dhammā pi vo pahātabbā pag'eva adhammā*. Comy takes *dhammā* here to mean “good states,” ie calm and insight (*samatha, vipassanā*), citing **Laṭutikôpama S** (M 66.26-33/1:455) as an example of the teaching of the abandonment of attachment to calm, and **Mahā Taṇhāsāṅkhaya S** (M 38.14/1:260 f = SD 7.10) as one of the abandonment of attachment to insight. Bodhi, however, is of the view that “*dhamma* here signifies not good states themselves, but the teachings, the correct attitude to which was delineated just above in the simile of the snake.” (M:ÑB 1209 n255). See Introd.

¹⁴⁹ **The Ratha,vinīta S** (M 24) is a dialogue between Puṇṇa Mantāṇi,putta and Sāriputta on the true purpose of the Dharma in the spirit of the raft parable and discussing it in greater detail.

¹⁵⁰ D 22.10/1:133 f = SD 3.13. Comy explains that this passage aims at showing the fault in merely gaining intellectual knowledge of the Dharma (as in Ariṭṭha's case). The “good for sake of which one learns the Dharma” is the paths and fruits. (MA 2:106)

¹⁵¹ Just as the Vedic brahmins believe that *śabda* (revealed word) is preserved in the Vedas, Christians generally believe that *logos* (God as word) is preserved literally in the Bible. Both *śabda* (a post-Buddhist Mimāṃsā Skt term) and *logos* (Gk) tr as “word.” Buddhism, on the other hand, seek direct experience of truth (*sacca*, related to the word “such”) and reality (*tathā*, related to the word “that”): you can that Buddhists are concerned with “suchness” and “thatness,” or more simply, with the “truly real” (*yathā, bhūta*) or true reality (not virtual reality).

¹⁵² See SD 17.6(2.1).

the Koran), often look up to their own religious leaders, often charismatic personalities, for *religious interpretation and injunctions*, and it is these leaders that actually rule their lives. Such groups are effectively cults insofar as their members centre this lives around a living authority figure and often regard other systems and society at large or certain groups in an antagonistic manner.

In any case, whether the authority is based on a holy book (scripture) or on the leader's word, the same doubtful point of “scriptural authority” applies. This is especially the case where the followers are not allowed to question such an authority, or can do so only in a limited or superficial way. Scriptures, after all, are all man-made texts—edited, revised or authorized—of what is perceived and accepted as religious experience. Any scripture, oral or scribal, spoken or written, to be understood has to be interpreted and reinterpreted, and often enough, parts of it would be ignored, misunderstood or even forgotten. Charismatic religious figures are often those who have successfully manipulated their scripture for their own ends. One therefore needs to go beyond the wood of *the letter* to see the tree of *the spirit*. This only comes from a direct experience of reality: if one is hungry, one has to take the meal oneself.

3a (5) “Do not go by pure reason” (*mā takka,hetu[,gāhena]*)

Takka is sometimes translated as “logic,”¹⁵³ but I think it is more closely related to *naya* (the following doubtful point, that of “inference”). The Buddha's admonition *mā takka,hetu*, means that pure reason should not be taken to be fully reliable as a source of knowledge. Pure reason is theoretical or discursive speculation, as opposed to practical reason, that is, careful thinking for the sake of happiness here and hereafter, and as a means to spiritual liberation.

In the **Sandaka Sutta** (M 76), Ānanda speaks of four types of religions that are not necessarily false but are unsatisfactory (*anassāsika*). Such a teaching has four possibilities:

well reasoned,	true	(<i>sutakkitaṃ tathā</i>);
well reasoned,	false	(<i>sutakkitaṃ aññathā</i>);
ill reasoned,	true	(<i>dutakkitaṃ tathā</i>); or
ill reasoned,	false	(<i>dutakkitaṃ aññathā</i>).

This means that the truth or falsity of an idea or teaching cannot be judged by the consistency of its reasoning alone. For, even a well reasoned idea may be false in the light of related facts, and an ill reasoned idea may be true from personal experience. Just as an idea accepted on the best authority may be false [Comy 3a(1)], the soundness of reasoning is no guarantee of truth.¹⁵⁴ Further investigation and direct knowledge are needed.¹⁵⁵

In the suttas, *takka* has two senses, which according to **Jayatileke** are as follows:

- (1) the kind of reasoning with which the theories, which were debated at this time, were defended or criticized, even if they may not have been in origin products of reasoning at all, or
- (2) the kind of reasoning with which the speculative, rational metaphysical theories were constructed and which the commentator has called “pure reasoning.” (1963:271 f)

In simple terms, we can call the first “critical reasoning” or “practical reasoning,” and the second “speculative reasoning” or “pure reasoning.” Both may have a rational basis, but while the former is *practical*, the latter tends to be *speculative*. The Buddha often applies the former, but clearly rejects the latter.

Pure reason (or “pure reasoning,” according to Jayatileke), being theoretical, discursive and speculative, has, as a rule, no interest in or actually rejects spiritual inquiry, either because their proponents lack the tools of introspection or they simply have more mundane motives. Where pure reason is common

¹⁵³ As Bodhi does (2005:89).

¹⁵⁴ See Jayatileke 1963:271 f.

¹⁵⁵ For detailed discussion, see Jayatileke 1963:205 f, 271-276.

(such as in scientific, economic or political thinking), the purpose is usually to work out some sort of universal system, to find some sort of global principle governing the universe, society or the country. As such, pure reason usually involves the “power mode” [Intro 3.3].

On a psychological level, “pure reason(ing)” is simply another term for “mental proliferation” (*papañca*), the latent tendency or habitual impulse, as a result of lust, ill will, and ignorance, to conceptualize and speculate about one’s sense-experiences.¹⁵⁶ Buddhism is not against reasoning in its critical form: in fact, it can be helpful in discerning good and evil, and choosing good and avoiding evil.

The point here is that the spiritual inclined mind would spontaneously, as it were, be able to see the true nature of reality that lies beyond the realm of thought [reasoning] (*atakkāvacara*). Throughout **the Brahma,ajāla Sutta** (D 1) we find this stock passage at the start of the Sutta and in the thirteen refrains following each of the eight main standpoints (or sets) of 62 grounds for wrong views:

There are, bhikshus, other dharmas, deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful and sublime, beyond the sphere of reasoning, subtle, to be known by the wise, that the Tathagata, having realized for himself with direct knowledge, expounds to others—those who, rightly praising the Tathagata according to reality, would speak regarding these. (D 1.28)¹⁵⁷

It is because the Buddha’s wisdom is direct, total, and profound, going “beyond the sphere of reasoning,” that he is able to discern and explain all the 62 grounds for wrong views, the roots of human speculation.

Practical reason, on the other hand, aims at spiritual inquiry and is a more personal effort at self-understanding, even self-liberation. The practical reasoner, certainly in the Buddhist context, seeks to work out mental and social environments that conduce to personal development and the general good. Such an endeavour can of course serve one in the quest for self-awakening.

3a (6) “Do not go by inference [by logic]” (*mā naya,hetu[,gāhena]*)

1 INFERENCE AS NAYA. In non-Buddhist systems, such as Trairāśika Ajīvikas and the Jains, the term *naya* in the technical sense of “standpoint,” a usage not found in the Pali Canon (Jayatilleke 1963: 273). Jayatilleke distinguishes between two kinds of inference: the inference without causation and the inference with causation.¹⁵⁸ The former kind of inference (without causation) is that of the non-Buddhist teachers and traditions. The Vedic conception of order in the universe, for example, was not a causal one, but based on primitive animistic beliefs.¹⁵⁹ The universe was ruled by *ṛta*, the course of things ruled by the god Varuṇa.¹⁶⁰

In the Buddhist context, *naya*, or more fully *naya,hetu*, has to do with proper logical reasoning by way of cause and effect. In **the Darī,mukha Jātaka** (J 378), for example, *naya* is used for “right inference”: “the wise one makes a right inference” (*nayaṃ nayati medhavī*, J 4:241) as opposed to *anaya*, “wrong inference”: “the foolish makes a wrong inference” (*anayaṃ nayati dummedho*).¹⁶¹

2 INFERENCE AS ANVAYA. The *Critical Pāli Dictionary* (CPD) gives these meanings of *anvaya*: (1) series, lineage, succession; (2) successor, next, following; (3) ifc: following, descended from, dependent on; (4) (logical) connection, reasoning, inference, conclusion, consequence; (5) “positive concomitance.” This word is famously found in the term *dharm’ anvaya*, by which Sāriputta, in **the Sampasādanīya Sutta** (D 28),¹⁶² makes his lion-roar that the Buddha is “the best Buddha.” I have rendered it as “the drift

¹⁵⁶ As a modern Buddhist puts it: “If humanity is suffering then pure reason is a symptom of this suffering not the means to its alleviation.” (Nagapriya nd 7)

¹⁵⁷ D 1.28/1:12, 1.52/1:22, 1.60/1:24, 1.66/1:28, 1.70.1:29, 1.73/1:30 (summary), 1.77c/1:31, 1.80c/1:32, 1.83c/-1:31, 1.92b/1:36, 1.99c/1:38, 1.100c/1:39, 1.104/1:39 = SD 25.2.

¹⁵⁸ See Jayatilleke 1963:443-464.

¹⁵⁹ See LS Stebbing, *A Modern Introduction to Logic*, London, 1945:293.

¹⁶⁰ See S Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* vol 1 1941:78 f.

¹⁶¹ See Jayatilleke 1963:273 f.

¹⁶² D 28.21/3:101 = SD 14.14. Repeats in **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16.1.17a/2:83) = SD 9.

of the Dharma,”¹⁶³ or alternately, “by means of the Dharma,” that is, by inference through the Dharma. Elsewhere, *dharm’ anvaya* is found in **the Ānāpa Vatthu Sutta 1** (S 12.33)¹⁶⁴ as “inferential knowledge” (*anvaye nāṇaṃ*),¹⁶⁵ which by way of retrospection (recollection of past lives) enables him to deduce the qualities of past Buddhas and infer the qualities of future Buddhas. Sāriputta means that his lion-roar is based on right inference (*anvaya*) through his understanding and realization of the Dharma as an arhat.

The Buddhist notion of inference (termed *anvaya*) is closely related to dependent arising. Inference can, in fact, be used in a positive way to enter the path of sainthood, that is, by way of “the knowledge of phenomena” (*dhamme nāṇa*) and “inferential knowledge” (*anvaye nāṇa*). Both these terms are found in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33),¹⁶⁶ **the Ānāpa Vatthu Sutta 1** (S 12.33)¹⁶⁷ and **the Vibhaṅga** (Vbh §796/329). The Ānāpa Vatthu Sutta 1 illustrates how inference (*naya*) is done so as to bring spiritual growth and realization, thus:

Bhikshus, when a noble disciple
thus understands decay-and-death (*jarā, maraṇa*);
thus understands the arising of decay-and-death;
thus understands the ending of decay-and-death;
thus understands the way to the ending of decay-and-death.

—This is “**the knowledge of phenomena**” (*dhamme nāṇa*).¹⁶⁸

By means of this principle (*dhamma*) that is seen, known, immediately won, fathomed,
he applies the method to the past and to the future thus:

“Whatever recluses or brahmins in the past
who directly knew decay-and-death,
who directly know the arising of decay-and-death,
who directly know the ending of decay-and-death,
who directly know the path to the ending of decay-and-death,
knew it in the very same way just as I do now.

Whatever recluses or brahmins in the future
who will directly knew decay-and-death,
who will directly know the arising of decay-and-death,
who will directly know the ending of decay-and-death,
who will directly know the path to the ending of decay-and-death,
will know it in the very same way just as I do now.”

—This is “**the inferential knowledge**” (*anvaye nāṇa*).¹⁶⁹ (S 12.33.17-20/2:57 f) = SD 35.11

Bodhi points out¹⁷⁰ that it is very significant to note that the key phrase of **the Ānāpa Vatthu Sutta 1** here, “seen, understood, immediately attained, fathomed” (in connection with “a noble disciple”) corresponds exactly to the terms used in the stock description of one who has “the Dharma eye” (*dhamma, -cakkhu*): “seen the Dharma, understood the Dharma, fathomed the Dharma,” thus:

“a noble disciple”: *diṭṭhena viditena akālikena pattena pariyoḅāḷhena*,¹⁷¹

“one with Dharma-eye”: *diṭṭha, dhammo patta, dhammo vidita, dhammo pariyoḅāḷha, dhammo*.¹⁷²

¹⁶³ Here I follow the tr of PED 338b & Walshe, and guided by Comys which gloss *anvaya* as *anumāna* (inference) (DA 3:880, MA 3:352, SA 3:210).

¹⁶⁴ S 12.33/2:58 = SD 35.11.

¹⁶⁵ Cf SA 2:53 (on **Upanisā S**, S 12.23.4/2:30 = SD 6.12) we can deduce *dharm’ anvaya* to be “review knowledge” (*paccavekkhaṇā nāṇa*), by which the arhat confirms his awakening.

¹⁶⁶ D 33.1.11(11)/3:226.

¹⁶⁷ S 12.33/2:58 = SD 35.11.

¹⁶⁸ S:B 571 tr as “the knowledge of the principle.”

¹⁶⁹ Jayatilleke tr it as “inductive knowledge” (1963:443).

¹⁷⁰ S:B 754 n103.

¹⁷¹ S 12.33.18/2:58 = SD 35.11.

“This implies,” concludes Bodhi, “that the Dhamma which the stream-enterer has seen is dependent origination, an inference additionally confirmed by the closing passage of the present sutta [the *Ñāṇa Vatthu Sutta* 1].”¹⁷³ (S:B 754 n103; emphasis added.)

It is often misconceived that the direct knowledge of dependent arising is the unique quality of an arhat. However, this direct knowledge is already won by the stream-winner, that is, when one attains “penetration into the Dharma” (*dhammābhisamaya*). The arya’s knowledge of dependent arising, as mentioned above, has two aspects:¹⁷⁴

- (1) knowledge of phenomena (*dhamme ñāṇa*), that is, the direct perception of the relationships of each pair of factors of dependent arising in the present; and
- (2) inferential knowledge (*anvaye ñāṇa*) of this fixed order of phenomena that has occurred in the past and will occur in the future.

From the two discourses, **Ñāṇa Vatthu Suttas 1-2** (S 12.33-34),¹⁷⁵ we know that anyone who comprehends dependent arising, does so in just the same way as an arya (noble saint) does. However, when one gains this knowledge as a stream-winner, one is totally assured of the final goal: this is also evident from **the Pañca,bhera,bhaya Sutta** (S 12.41)¹⁷⁶ and the closing paragraph of **the Paccaya Sutta** (S 12.27),¹⁷⁷ **the Bhikkhu Sutta** (S 12.28),¹⁷⁸ **the Paṭhama Ariya,sāvaka Sutta** (S 12.49)¹⁷⁹ and **the Dutiya Ariya,sāvaka Sutta** (S 12.50).¹⁸⁰ The closing paragraph of the Paccaya Sutta (S 12.27) runs thus:

Bhikshus, when a noble disciple thus understands <u>the condition</u> (<i>paccaya</i>); ¹⁸¹	
thus understands the arising of the condition;	
thus understands the ending of the condition;	
thus understands the way to the ending of the condition,	
he is then called a noble disciple	
accomplished in view	(<i>diṭṭhi,sampanno</i>),
accomplished in vision	(<i>dassana,sampanno</i>),
who has arrived at this Sublime Dharma	(<i>āgato imaṃ saddhammaṃ</i>),
who sees this Sublime Dharma	(<i>passati imaṃ saddhammaṃ</i>),
who is accomplished in the learner’s knowledge	(<i>sekhena ñāṇena samannāgato</i>),
who is accomplished in the learner’s true knowledge	(<i>sekhāya vijjāya samannāgato</i>),
who has entered the Dharma stream	(<i>dhamma,sotaṃ samāpanno</i>),
a noble one with penetrative wisdom	(<i>ariyo nibbedhika,pañño</i>),
who stands right before the door to the Deathless	(<i>amata,dvāram āhacca tiṭṭhati</i>).
	(S 12.27/2:43. Cf S 12.28/2:45; S 12.49/2:78; S 12.50/2:79)

Now let us come down to earth again to examine the conventional understanding and usage of *naya,-hetu* or inference, and logical reasoning.

¹⁷² Eg **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3.2.22/1:110,14-15).

¹⁷³ S 12.33.36/2:59.

¹⁷⁴ See S:B 525.

¹⁷⁵ S 12.33-34/2:56-60.

¹⁷⁶ S 12.41/2:68-70 = SD 3.3(4.2).

¹⁷⁷ S 12.27/2:43.

¹⁷⁸ S 12.28/2:45.

¹⁷⁹ S 12.49/2:78.

¹⁸⁰ S 12.50/2:79.

¹⁸¹ “The condition” (*paccaya*), that is, each pair of links of dependent arising: this is the **Paccaya S** (S 12.27/-2:43) theme; the other themes are as follows: **Bhikkhu S** (S 12.28/2:45): dependent arising (fourfold truth template); **Ariya,sāvaka S 1-2** (S 12.49-50/2:78 f): “the world” (*loka*).

3 DEDUCTION AND INDUCTION.

3.1 TERMINOLOGY. In modern philosophy, there are two forms of reasoning: deduction and induction (also called deductive logic or deductive inference, and inductive logic or inductive inference, respectively).

Deduction, in daily application, often refers to observing things which few others observe and drawing important and surprising conclusions from those observations. This is the kind of “deductive powers” that the fictitious detective Sherlock Holmes often refers to.¹⁸²

In philosophy, deduction is used in a different sense. It is a valid argument in which it is impossible to assert the premises and to deny the conclusion without contradicting oneself. In this kind of reasoning, the conclusion is necessitated by, or reached from, previously known facts (the premises). If the premises are true, the conclusion must be true.

If a philosopher claims to have deduced conclusion r from premises p and q,

he is saying that he has *inferred* r from p and q;

he is claiming that p and q *imply* r (ie, he is claiming that, if someone affirmed both p and q, but denied r, that person would be asserting a self-contradiction).

Valid deduction: (1) All men are mortal. (2) The Buddha is a man. (3) Therefore, the Buddha is mortal.

Deductive reasoning may also be defined as an inference in which the conclusion is of no greater generality than the premises, or inference in which the conclusion is just as certain as the premises. In simple terms, the conclusion is a specific case, one example of what is stated by the premises. It is important to note, however, that even if the deductive reasoning is *logically* correct, it may not always *factually* true, that is, it conflicts with our knowledge of the world or reality, for example:

If it is raining then the ground is dry. ×
It is raining.
Therefore the ground is dry.

Inference, in Western philosophy, simply means “the drawing of a conclusion,” whether valid (reasonable) or invalid (unreasonable). There are three types of inference:¹⁸³

- Deductive inference: from the cause and the rule, one finds the effect
- Abductive inference: from the rule and the effect, one finds the cause
- Inductive inference: from the cause and the effect, one finds the rule.

For example,

Hooke’s law¹⁸⁴ is the rule that gives the elongation of a beam (an effect) when a force (the cause) is acting on a beam.

¹⁸² However, most of Holmes’ “deductions” in fact use inductive or abductive reasoning; very few are actually deductive in nature. There is nearly always *some* conceivable, even unlikely, way that his conclusions could have been wrong, a fact often parodied. **Abduction** is a syllogism (set of statements) in which the major premise is evident but the minor and therefore the conclusion only probable. It is a reasoning process that starts from a set of facts and derives their most likely explanations, which is common in hypothetical work in science and computing (where it is colloquially referred to as an “inference to the best explanation”). Where an abduction is highly improbable, it is called an *apagoge* [UK æpəˈgəʊdʒiː, US ˈapəˌɡɔjē], sometimes known as *reductio ad absurdum* (Lat “a reduction to absurdity”): eg, (1) When it rains the ground becomes wet. (Major premise). (2) The ground is wet (minor premise). (3) Therefore, it has rained (a conclusion that is only probable because the river, for example, could have overflowed onto the ground).

¹⁸³ Simply, the rule is the first premise, the cause is the second premise, and the effect the third premise (conclusion).

- If the force and Hooke’s law are known, the elongation of the beam can be deducted.
- If the elongation and Hooke’s law are known, the force acting on the beam can be abducted.
- If the elongation and the force are known, Hooke’s law can be inducted.

In simple terms, inference is the act or process of deriving a conclusion based solely on what one already knows.

Induction or inductive reasoning is not a clear term, sometimes referring to reasoning other than the deductive, or, otherwise, it is a method of reasoning by which a general law or principle is inferred from observed particular instances.¹⁸⁵ In simple terms, induction, as we have seen above, tries, working backwards, to find the rule (a truth) by inferring from the cause and effect.¹⁸⁶

Wrong ideas about karma. The **Mahā Kamma,vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 136) gives valuable insight into the nature of wrong inference or, more exactly, wrong inductive inference, resulting in wrong views of karma. The Buddha tells Ānanda how someone good in meditation, having attained clairvoyance (“the divine eye”), has the following (mis)perceptions resulting in these improper (generally wrong) views:

Perception	Conclusions
(1) He “sees” a person, immoral in every way, ¹⁸⁷ reborn in a suffering state.	(1.1) There is evil karma and its result. ✓
	(1.2) All who are immoral go to hell. ✗
(2) He “sees” a person, immoral in every way, reborn in a heaven.	(2.1) There is <i>no</i> evil karma. ✗
	(2.2) All who are immoral go to heaven. ✗
(3) He “sees” a person, moral in every way, ¹⁸⁸ reborn in a heaven.	(3.1) There is good karma. ✓
	(3.2) All who are moral go to heaven. ✗
(4) He “sees” a person, moral in every way, reborn in a suffering state.	(3.1) There is <i>no</i> good karma. ✗
	(3.2) All who are moral go to hell. ✗

Table 3a(6)3 Conclusions on karma

(M 136.9-16/3:210-214) = SD 4.16

¹⁸⁴ In physics, Hooke’s law of elasticity states that if a force (F) is applied to an elastic spring or prismatic rod (with length L and cross section A), its extension is linearly proportional to its tensile stress σ and modulus of elasticity (E). The law assumes perfectly elastic behavior. It is named after the 17th century English physicist Robert Hooke (1635-1703). For a technical explanation, see http://ccrma.stanford.edu/~jos/pasp/Hooke_s_Law.html.

¹⁸⁵ It is sometimes taught that deductive reasoning proceeds from the general to the particular, while inductive reasoning proceeds from the particular to the general. This is false—at least, this is not the way logicians use these terms. There are deductively valid arguments that proceed from the particular to the general (Raymond is happy, therefore something is happy) and inductive arguments that proceed from the general to the particular (the natives of India are called Indians, therefore this Indian person is a native of India).

¹⁸⁶ On most of the tts used in this section, see eg AW Sparkes, *Talking Philosophy*, 1991, index.

¹⁸⁷ “Here, some person harms life, takes the not-given, indulges in sexual misconduct, speaks false words, speaks malicious words, speaks harsh words, speaks frivolous words, is covetous, has a mind of ill will, holds wrong view.” These are the tenfold unwholesome course of action (*akusala kamma,patha*) (D 33.3.2(3)/3:269, 290; A 10.176.3-6/5:264-266).

¹⁸⁸ “Here, some person refrains from harming life, refrains from taking the not-given, refrains from indulging in sexual misconduct, refrains from speaking false words, refrains from speaking malicious words, refrains from speaking harsh words, refrains from speaking frivolous words, not covetous, has a mind without ill will, holds right view.” These are the tenfold wholesome course of action (*kusala kamma,patha*) (D 33.3.2(3)/3:269, 34.2.3(5)/3:290; A 10.176.7-10/5:266-268).

In the Sutta proper, there are two more identical remarks for each of these four views, that is, in each case the meditator further (a) declares that those who know thus are right, but those who know otherwise are wrong (which the Buddha rejects), and (b) “only this is true, all else is false” (which the Buddha rejects, too). The Buddha goes on to explain why he rejects most of them, approving only two of them:

In the case of (1):¹⁸⁹

- (a) either he has earlier on [a previous life] done an evil deed that results in painful feelings;
- (b) or, later on [in this life] he has done an evil deed that results in painful feelings;
- (c) or, at the time of death he has undertaken and established a wrong view.¹⁹⁰

As such, after death, . . . he re-appears in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.¹⁹¹

In the case of (2):¹⁹²

- (a) either he has earlier on [in a previous life] done a good deed that results in pleasant feelings;
- (b) or, later on [in this life] he has done a good deed that results in pleasant feelings;
- (c) or, at the time of death he has undertaken and established right view.

As such, after death, . . . he re-appears in a happy destination, in heaven.¹⁹³

In the case of (3):¹⁹⁴

- (a) either he has earlier on [in a previous life] done a good deed that results in pleasant feelings;
- (b) or, later on [in this life] he has done a good deed that results in pleasant feelings;
- (c) or, at the time of death he has undertaken and established right view.

As such, after death, . . . he re-appears in a happy destination, in heaven.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ M 136.17/3:214 = SD 4.16.

¹⁹⁰ These are the 3 kinds of karma classified according to time of taking effect. See **(Kamma) Nidāna S** (A 3.33/1:134-136) = SD 4.14, on causes and kinds of karma. See **Nibbedhika,pariyāya S** (A 6.63.12c) = SD 6.11. See also **Visuddhi,magga** where these 3 types of karma are respectively named as *diṭṭha,dhamma vedanīya kamma, upapaj-ja,vedanīya kamma* and *apara,pariyāya vedanīya kamma*—and a fourth, *ahosi kamma*, lapsed or ineffectual karma (Vism 19.14/601). See Vism:Ñ 19.14/696 n2. The first two kinds of karma may be without karmic result if the circumstances required for their ripening are missing, or because of the presence of a stronger counteractive karma; as such, they are called *ahosi,kamma*: cf **Loṇa,phala S** (A 3.99) = SD 3.5. The next birth actually depends on the dying person’s last thought-moment. As such, one’s dying thoughts should be to recollect or reflect on the good deeds one has done: giving, moral virtue, lovingkindness, etc. The **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 62 = SD 3.11) closes with the remark that for one who develops and often cultivates the Breath Meditation, “even the last breath leaves with your knowledge, not without it” (M 62.30/1:426)—that is, one dies mindfully with right view. See Vism 8.24/291 f. On academic attempts to show that orig there are only 2 kinds of karma (present and future), and its rebuttal, see Analayo 2005 at M 3:214. See also prev n.

¹⁹¹ **Devadatta**, for example, persuaded prince Ajātasattu to murder his own father, Bimbisāra (a stream-winner) (DA 1:135-137), and thrice attempted to murder the Buddha himself and once succeeded in wounding him, and caused a schism in the order (V 2:191-198)—these last two deeds are certain to lead to rebirth in hell. On Devadatta, see Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples* lecture 7: “The Buddha’s Bad Karma” (2002) §§5-14.

¹⁹² M 136.18/3:214 = SD 4.16.

¹⁹³ A good example here is that of the public executioner, **Tamba,dāṭhika Cora,ghātaka** (DhA 8.1), or Copper-tooth, who after a bloody career as a bandit, killed his own comrades and then became executioner of criminals for fifty years. He met the venerable Sāriputta whose teachings uplifted his mind, lightening the burden of his evil karma so that he attained heavenly rebirth (DhA 8.1/2:202 ff).

¹⁹⁴ M 136.19/3:214 f = SD 4.16.

¹⁹⁵ An example here is that of **rajah Pasenadi of Kosala**. The **Anāgata,vāmsa** says that he is a Bodhisattva and will become the 4th future Buddha (JPTS 1886:37). On Pasenadi, see Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples* lecture 8: “The Thundering Silence” (2002) §19.

In the case of (4):¹⁹⁶

- (a) either he has earlier on [in a previous life] done a good deed that results in pleasant feelings;
- (b) or, later on [in this life] he has done a good deed that results in pleasant feelings;
- (c) or, at the time of death he has undertaken and established wrong view.

As such, after death,...he re-appears in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.¹⁹⁷
(M 136.17-20/3:214 f) = SD 4.16

3.2 PROBLEMS WITH CREATOR-GOD IDEA. In the section on eternalism (*sassata,vāda*) of the **Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1.28-34), the Buddha explains—as the first four grounds for wrong view—how some accomplished meditators who are eternalists, on four grounds, proclaim—through *wrong inductive inference*—the self and the world to be eternal, thus:

- (1) through recollecting up to 100,000 of their past lives;
- (2) through recollecting up to 10 aeons (world-cycles) of their past lives;
- (3) through recollecting up to 40 aeons of their past lives; and
- (4) fabricating it through reasoning, having investigated it through mental inquiry, by way of their own intelligence, that is, the rationalist¹⁹⁸ and the investigator [experimenter].¹⁹⁹

(D 1.28-34/1:12-17) = SD 25.2

The Brahma,jāla Sutta (D 1), in its section on partial-eternalism (*ekacca,sassata,vāda*), gives another interesting example of *wrong inductive inference* in its explanation of how the Creator-God idea arose (that is, the fifth ground for wrong view). When the universe collapses (or devolves), beings here are mostly born in the Ābhassara [streaming-radiance] Brahmā world. When the universe re-evolves, the first being to re-arise (on account of his immense good karma) is Mahā Brahmā. Then, says the Sutta, “as a result of dwelling there all alone for so long, unrest, discontent and agitation arise²⁰⁰ in him, thus: ‘O that other beings might come here, too!’”²⁰¹

Just then, other beings whose good karma have ripened, are reborn in the same universe, which leads Mahā Brahmā to infer that he has created them, since at his fiat, as it were, they have arisen. And these beings, too, noticing that Mahā Brahmā has arisen before them, surmise that he must have created them, proclaiming, “He must be Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Lord God, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Ordainer, the Almighty, the Father of all that are and that will be. By this Lord²⁰² Brahmā, have we been created.” The Sutta continues:

¹⁹⁶ M 136.20/3:215 = SD 4.16.

¹⁹⁷ An example here is **Mallikā**, queen of king Pasenadi. She lived a virtuous life of giving, keeping the five precepts, and the 8 precepts and so on. However, in a moment of indiscretion, she had sexual intercourse with a dog in the bath-house. When the king suspected this, she conjured up an elaborate lie. These acts weighed heavily on her mind to her last moments. As a result she spent seven days in Avīci hell. However, her own habitual goodness then brought her rebirth in Tusita heaven (DhA 9.6/3:119-122).

¹⁹⁸ *Takkī*, ie reasoners and logicians. See foll n.

¹⁹⁹ *Vīmaṃsī*, those who examine and investigate. Both the term “rationalist” and “investigator” clearly refers the academician, philosopher or scientist of our times. Here *takkī hoti vīmaṃsī* may be taken as either a dvandva (a reasoner and an investigator) or as tatpuruṣa (a reasoner and investigator, ie one who investigates through reasoning). In fact, *takkī,vīmaṃsī* may be taken as syn with *ākāra,parivittakka* (“rational investigation” or “investigative reasoning”). This is one of the 5 courses of knowledge, viz, faith (*saddhā*), approval (*ruci*), oral tradition (*anussava*), investigative reasoning (*ākāra,parivittakka*), and reflective acceptance of a view (*diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khanti*) (M 95.14/-2:170, 101.11/2:218, 102.15/1:234).

²⁰⁰ “[U]nrest, discontent, agitation arises,” *nibbusittā anabhirati paritassanā uppajjati*. These 3 abstract nn are taken as a cpd, hence their common verb is sg.

²⁰¹ This is a an agitation arising on account of craving (*taṇhā,tasanā*): see 3.41.

²⁰² *Bhavaṃ*.

Now, bhikshus, there is the case that a certain being, having fallen from that realm, comes here.²⁰³

Having come to this world, he goes forth from the home life into homelessness. When he has gone forth into homelessness, by means of exertion, by means of striving, by means of devotion, by means of diligence, by means of right attention, he touches [attains] mental concentration, such that he recollects that past life, but recollects not what is before that.

He says thus:

‘We are created by Lord Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Lord God, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Ordainer, the Almighty, the Father of all that are and that will be.

He is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change: he will remain so just as eternity itself.

But we have been created by that Lord Brahmā and have come here [to this world]. We are impermanent, unstable, short-lived, subject to dying.’ (D 1.18-19/1:18) = SD 25.2

The tone of this account is interesting and humorous: it does *not* say that the Creator-God idea is false, but that it is *based* on false inference. No moral judgement is made on such ideas, except that they are unsatisfactory (*anassāsikam*), that is, they provide no guarantee for spiritual liberation (simply because they are based on a false inference [Intro 5.2]). Understandably, theology (the study of God) and theodicy (why God and suffering exist) are like attempts to force a square peg into a round hole.

4 FAITH IN BUDDHISM. Because of the impossibility of the Creator-God idea, in the sense that there is no satisfactory way of proving that such a being exists, theologians like Anselm of Canterbury (1033/ 34-1109) understandably wrote: *Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam. Nam et hoc credo, quia, nisi credidero, non intelligam.* (“Nor do I seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe that I may understand. For this too I believe, that unless I first believe, I shall not understand.”) The Buddhist answer is clearly more satisfactory.²⁰⁴

“Nor do I seek to believe that I may understand, but I understand that I may believe. For this too I understand, that unless I first understand, I shall not *truly* believe.”

The key problem with such a theological statement is, ironically, that the *means* seems to justify the end: *believe* that you may understand. The point is whether such believing is worthwhile at all, unless one accepts that believing is good in itself. It is simply unsatisfactory to believe in something for which there is no workable proof whatsoever. As the saying goes, “seeing is believing.”²⁰⁵

In the Buddhist case, however, the ten discourses of **the Okkanti Saṃyutta** (ch 25) admonishes that a disciple could either simply “believe” in—have *faith* in—the fact of impermanence, or he could examine it with wisdom. If this is kept up wisely as one’s spiritual practice, then one is assured of the path to liberation in this life itself, if not surely at this life’s very last moment.²⁰⁶

Here, faith, like every other Buddhist teaching, especially when conveyed through language, are always *provisional*, as we are reminded, for example, by the parable of the raft [Comy 3a(4)2]. **The Caṅkī Sutta** (D 95), as we have seen [Comy 1d(2)], presents a twelve-step training for the “final attainment of truth” (*saccānupatti*). The first step here is faith, acting as it were as a springboard to other higher

²⁰³ *Thānam kho pan’etaṃ, bhikkhave, vijjati yaṃ aññataro satto tamhā kāyā cavitvā itthattam āgacchati.* That is, that Brahmā dies and is reborn on earth.

²⁰⁴ This is one version of a common joke: “Philosophy is like being in a dark room without a candle and looking for a black cat. Metaphysics is like being in a dark room without a candle and looking for a black cat that isn’t there. Theology is like being in a dark room without a candle and looking for a black cat that isn’t there, and shouting ‘I found it!’” (Based on Ellen Rosenbaum)

²⁰⁵ However, for a philosophical discussion, see eg Daniel C Dennett, “Seeing is believing—or is it?” In K Akers (ed), *Perception*. Vancouver Studies in Cognitive Science 5. Oxford University Press, 1996:158-172. Unpaginated digital copy accessible from <http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/papers/seebelie.htm>.

²⁰⁶ See eg (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225) = SD 16.7.

qualities. But this is not the “believe that I may understand” kind of faith, because it is actually the result of some prior personal experience, such as Sāriputta’s first meeting with Assaji, where the former’s faith arises in seeing the latter’s calm demeanour, or in the case of the Kālāmas themselves at the end of this Sutta [§18]. It is with this wise faith that the journey to awakening and liberation begins.

The point here is very simple yet universal: it is impossible to deny the fact of impermanence. But more important than that, the Buddha has found the way in which this awareness could actually lead to spiritual liberation, that is, either to accept it on faith, that is, reasoned faith (since it is an observable fact), or after careful examination, that is, through wisdom. Buddhism is as simple and efficacious as that.²⁰⁷

3a (7) “Do not go by reasoned thought [by specious reasoning]” (*mā ākāra,-parivittakkena*)

The word *ākāra* has two meanings: (1) “ways” (D 1:138, 139), and (2) “reason, reasoning” (M 1:320). The **Saṃyutta Commentary** explains *ākāra,parivittakka* thus: “For another, as he thinks, a certain thesis appears valid, and he concludes, ‘So it is,’ and accepts it by reasoned reflection (*ākāra,parivittakka*).” (SA 2:403).²⁰⁸ This reasoning however is simply the result of habitual tendency, not through any systematic way of thinking (unlike the previous two methods: *takka,hetu* and *naya,hetu*, which are more systematic).

The second meaning of *naya* as “reason” also applies to a statement in the **Vimāṃsaka Sutta** (M 47), where it is said that if others were to ask a monk for “the reasons (*ākāra*) or grounds (*anvayā*) on which he says that ‘the Blessed One is fully self-awakened...’,” he should be able to say, “Through direct knowledge in the Dharma in their various aspects, I have here come to the conclusion regarding certain dharmas [phenomena] by way of the Dharma, that I have inspiring faith in the Teacher to be fully self-awakened.”²⁰⁹

Such a belief is said to be “faith based on *reason* and rooted in *vision*” (*ākāra,vati saddhā dassana,mūlikā*) (loc cit), a stock passage referring to the stream-winner’s unshakable faith. This rational faith arises through critical examination (*vimāṃsā*) and partial verification is markedly different from the “rootless faith” (or blind belief, *amūlikā saddhā*, M 2:70) of the brahmins in the Vedas and which does not bear critical examination.²¹⁰

By itself, such a “reasoned faith” (*ākāra,vati saddhā*) does not amount of liberating knowledge (*aññā* or *ñāṇa*), but with “rooted vision” (*dassana,mūlika*), that is, a significant level of personal experience of reality, one can claim the validity of that knowledge for that level (namely, stream-winning). Again, by itself, reasoned faith cannot be a valid source of knowledge.

3a (8) “Do not go by acceptance of [being convinced of] a view after pondering on it” (*mā diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khantiyā*)

The Aṅguttara Commentary explains this point as “after considering [after reflecting] and after being convinced of it because it agrees with the view that we hold” (*amhākaṃ nijjhāyitvā khamitvā gahita,diṭṭhiyā saddhiṃ sameti*, AA 2:305). Here *khamati* has been rendered in strong sense as “being convinced.” Occasionally, when *khamati* occurs with *diṭṭhi*, it is usually translated as “approving of” or “agreeing with” some theory, such as *sabbam me khamati*, “all is agreeable to me” (M 1:497).²¹¹

²⁰⁷ On how wisdom leads to wise faith, see Intro 6.

²⁰⁸ Jayatilleke discusses *ākāra* as meaning “reason.” (1963:274).

²⁰⁹ *Tathā tathā’ham tasmīṃ dhamme abhiññāya idh’ekaccaṃ dhammaṃ dhammesu niṭṭham agamaṃ sathhari pasādim sammā,sambuddho bhagavā...* (M 47.15-16/1:320) = SD 35.6.

²¹⁰ See Jayatilleke 1963:393.

²¹¹ See Jayatilleke 1963:215, 275.

However, when *nijjhāna* (Skt *nidhyāna*, “wisdom or understanding”) is used with *khamati*—as in the phrase *nijjhānam khamati*—it is usually translated as “to be convinced of,” or more freely, “fails to see its wisdom.” This passage, for example, appears in **the Alagaddûpama Sutta** (M 22):²¹²

Without wisely examining the (true) purpose [or meaning] of those teachings with wisdom, they are not convinced of it [they fail to see its wisdom].

Tesam te dhammā paññāya attham anupaparikkhataṃ na nijjhānam khamanti.

(M 22.10/1:133) = SD 3.13

A positive usage of *nijjhānam khamati* is found in **the Kīṭāgiri Sutta** (M 70), thus:

Having heard the Dharma, he remembers [memorizes] it.²¹³

He examines the meaning of the teachings that he has remembered.

When he has examined their meaning, he is convinced of²¹⁴ the teachings after pondering on it. Being convinced of the teachings after pondering on it, will-power [initiative] arises in him.

Sutvā dhammaṃ dhāreti,

Dhātānam dhammānam attham upaparikkhati,

Attham upaparikkhato dhammā nijjhānam khamanti,

Dhamma, nijjhāna, khantiyā sati chando jāyati. (M 70.23-24/1:478-480)²¹⁵ = SD 11.1

The idiomatic phrase, *dhammā...khamanti* (*khamanti* in apposition to *dhammā*), literally translated “the teachings are convincing.” In the above context, translating this phrase idiomatically as “he is convinced of” fits it better than “he approves of,” which sounds weaker. Furthermore, this goes well with **the Aṅguttara Commentary** which explains this same line as “after consideration and after being convinced of it because it agrees with the view that we hold” (*amhākaṃ nijjhāyitvā khamitvā gahita, diṭṭhiyā saddhim sameti*, AA 2:305). So here we see that thinking and reflecting are essential aspects of spiritual growth: as such, there is a positive counterpart of this doubtful point, that is, “he is convinced of the Dharma after pondering on it” [1d(2)].

²¹² Bodhi: “Not examining the meaning of those teachings with wisdom, they do not gain a reflective acceptance of them.” “**They are not convinced of its wisdom,**” *na nijjhānam khamanti*, ie “they see no wisdom in it.” They are not convinced because of their failure to understand that the purpose of moral conduct is to attain concentration, the purpose of concentration the attaining of insight, etc. (MṬ qu by Nyanaponika 1974:35 n10). Here *nijjhāna* (Skt *nidhyāna*) means wisdom or understanding. This phrase, preceded by “having wisely examined the purpose [and/or meaning]” appears in **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70.20) and **Caṅkī S** (M 95.27). Cf “One for whom these teachings are accepted thus after being pondered to a sufficient degree with wisdom is called a Dhamma-follower” (S 25.1 & S:B 1099 n169).

²¹³ This and next line: *Sutvā dhammaṃ dhāreti | dhātānam dhammānam attham upaparikkhati*: here *dhammaṃ* (sg) in the first line becomes *dhammānam* (pl) in the second line. In the first line, *dhammaṃ* refers to the Teaching as a whole; in the second line, individual aspects or topics are meant.

²¹⁴ *Nijjhānam khamanti*, lit “insights are endured,” ie “capable of bearing insights”; idiomatic meaning “he is pleased with, approves of, finds pleasure in” (M 1:133 f; 479 f, 2:173, 175; S 3:225, 228, 5:377, 379; Vv 84.17). *Khanti* usually means “patience” but here it means “choice, receptivity, preference, acceptance.” The BHSD defines *ḷṣānti* as “intellectual receptivity; the being ready in advance to accept knowledge.” *Khanti* is often used in the Canon in this latter sense (see SD 12.13(2a) for refs). The phrase can also be freely rendered as “a receptivity in harmony with true reality.” On *khanti* as “mental receptivity,” see **Aniccā S** (A 6.98) = SD 12.13(3).

²¹⁵ Cf A 4:336, 5:154. See also Jayatilleke 1963:275 f.

3a (9) Do not go by (another’s) seeming ability (*mā bhavya,rūpatāya*)

The word *bhavya* comes from √BHŪ (to be, become) and *rūpa* means “having the nature of, fitting.” Jayatilleke explains that literally *mā bhavya,rūpatāya* would read “because of its having the nature of what its propriety or fittingness,” and he adds that

It would mean the acceptance of a proposition on the grounds of its being specifically *fitting* or appropriate to a context or situation. Ethical theorists have sometimes advocated “fittingness” as a criterion of an action.²¹⁶ According to them, an action would be right if it is the appropriate or proper action in the situation. It is a notion that could be extended to the field of truth. This interpretation of *bhavyarūpatā* though possible is unlikely, for it is too abstract a conception for the sixth century BC and for Indian thought in general, which loves the concrete rather than the abstract. (Jayatilleke 1963:200f)

We do however find a significant number of examples in the Suttas where *bhabba* (an equivalent form of *bhavya*) referring to those “from whom a proposition is accepted rather than to the proposition itself” (loc cit). *Bhabba* (ie *bhavya*), in the sense of “suitable or capable,” qualifies persons in such instances:

<i>bhabbo abhinibbhidāya</i>	capable of piercing through (the egg-shell)	(M 1:104=357)
<i>bhabbo sambodhāya</i>	capable of self-awakening	(M 1:357)
<i>bhabbo anuttarassa</i>	capable of attaining the supreme	
<i>yogakkhemassa adhigamāya</i>	security from the yokes (of defilements)	(M 1:357)
<i>bhabbā te anta,kiriyāya</i>	capable of making an end of it	(It 106)
<i>bhabbo dhammāṃ viññātum</i>	capable of knowing the Dharma	(U 49) ²¹⁷
<i>abhabbo katum</i>	unable to do it	(Sn p41)

Such usages are also supported by the Commentary, for example, *ayaṃ bhikkhu bhabba,rūpo imassa kathāṃ gahetum yuttam*, “this monk is capable: his statement could be accepted” (AA 2:305). As such, the phrase *bhavya,rūpatāya* may be translated as “by another’s seeming ability (or reliability, or competence.” In fact, Jayatilleke notes, this would be in effect the same as verbal testimony (*āptopadeśa* or *āptavacana*) as a means of knowledge, as recognized in later Indian philosophical tradition. (loc cit).

In our own times, the doubtful point of going by another’s seeming ability would refer to uncritically accepting a view on account of the person’s expertise or charisma. As far as **expertise** is concerned, even experts do not always agree with one another, and the errors they commit tend to have more widespread and devastating effects than those of a non-expert!

Charisma (the attribution of familiar or attractive qualities to another) can influence one in two ways: firstly, emotional attachment can arise from familiarity with a person,²¹⁸ and more deleteriously, charisma leads to psychological transference, where one transfers or displaces an emotion or affective attitude from a familiar person (say, one’s father, husband, or partner) onto the teacher or speaker.²¹⁹ In either case, the celebrity worship could make one dysfunctional.²²⁰ **Lakuṇṭhaka Bhaddiya** (“the dwarf monk”), in his Thera,gāthā, warns against accepting him on charisma, thus:

²¹⁶ PH Nowell Smith, *Ethics*, Penguin, 1954:120 f, 186 f. [Jayatilleke’s fn]

²¹⁷ However, we also have *bhabba,rūpo*, U 79.

²¹⁸ **The Puggala-p,pasāda S** (A 5.250/3:270) warns against the dangers of being devoted to one person because, should the person (a monk) is suspended by the order, or made to sit at the edge of the assembly, or leaves for a distant place, or leaves the order, or dies, one would then not attend to other monks (or teachers), as a result of which one neglects the Dharma, and as a result one’s personal development is negatively affected. [Comy 1d(2)]

²¹⁹ Such an emotion or affective attitude can also be transferred to a God-figure, which is actually very common in God-centred religions. See Piyasilo, *Charisma in Buddhism*, 1992h.

²²⁰ See eg “Thin line between celebrity worship and fatal attraction,” *The Straits Times* (Singapore), 15 Aug 2003; “Celebrity worship addictive: study” in *The Age* (Australia) 14 Aug 2003: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/08/14/1060588497208.html>.

- 469 Those people who have judged [measured]²²¹ me by appearance
and who follow me by voice,²²²
Overcome by desire and passion, they know me not.
- 470 The foolish one, surrounded by mental hindrances, neither knows the inside
Nor sees the outside—he is indeed misled by voice.
- 471 Who knows not the inside, but sees the outside:
Seeing only external fruits, he, too, is misled by voice.
- 472 Who knows the inside, and sees the outside:
Seeing without obstructions, he is not misled by voice. (Tha 469-472 ≠ A 2:71)

The Thera,gāthā Commentary explains the phrase “seeing only external fruits” (*bahiddhā,phala,dassa-vī*) as meaning “grasping only the fruits through grasping by way of inference” (*naya-g,gāhanena phala,-mattam gaṇhanto*, ThaA 2:198). Such a person, misled by another’s external or physical qualities wrongly infers that they entail wholesome inner qualities. Or, worse, one is simply attracted merely to another’s external or physical qualities for what they are. In either case, one’s mind is clearly dominated by lust and delusion.²²³

3a (10) “Do not go by the thought, ‘This recluse is our teacher.’ [‘This recluse is respected by us.’]” (*mā samaṇo no garu tī*)

The sentence *samaṇo no garu* may be rendered in three ways:

- (1) “our (*no*) recluse is a respected teacher (*garu*)”;
- (2) “our recluse is respected (*garu*)”; or
- (3) “(this) recluse is respected by us (*no*).”

Sentence (1) reflects partisanship or patronage, that he is *our* recluse, not some other person, that one regards as one’s teacher: this could have been spoken by a monk of another monk. (2) is more general, and refers to any recluse, not necessarily one’s teacher, but who is generally well-respected. (3), like (1), shows a certain bias between speaker and recluse. All three interpretations reflect the person’s *status*, either due to charisma or as one’s teacher.

On the whole, we can surmise that this doubtful point is against the unconditional acceptance of a statement on account of the speaker’s prestige or charisma. As such, it is similar to the previous doubtful point, point 9. However, while point 9 (*mā bhavya,rūpatāya*), refers to a person’s ability or intrinsic worth, this point (10) (*mā samaṇo no garu*) merely refers to his prestige, a point clearly discerned in the suttas. A teacher or speaker, for example, could be popular and respected but is not Dharma-centred in his teaching; or the audience is incapable of discerning good or bad qualities in him (or her). In **the Dhamma,kathika Sutta** (A 4.139 = Pug 4.7), the Buddha lists four types of Dharma speakers:

- (1) one who speaks little but on what is irrelevant (*asahita*) (to the spiritual development), and the audience is unskilled (*akusala*) in discerning it;
 - (2) one who speaks little and on what is relevant (*sahita*), and the audience is skilled (*kusala*) in discerning it;
 - (3) one who speaks much but on what is irrelevant, and the audience is unskilled in discerning it;
 - (4) one who speaks much and on what is relevant, and the audience is skilled in discerning it.
- (A 4.139/2:138; Pug 4.7/42)

²²¹ “Have judged,” *pāmiṃsu*, lit “(they) measured.”

²²² “Who follow me by voice,” *ye ca ghosena anvagū*, alt tr “who follow me by my voice.”

²²³ See **The Teacher or the Teaching?** = SD 3.14(6).

A classic application of this doubtful point is found in **the Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38), where it is said, *sathā no garu, satthu, gāravena ca mayam vādema*, “our teacher is respected; we speak out of respect for our teacher.”²²⁴ As this is directly related to this point, let us look at the whole passage in context. The Buddha is admonishing the monks against Ariṭṭha’s wrong view that sexual pleasure is not against the Teaching. The Buddha explains the nature of consciousness, of the body, of food (how the body and mind are sustained), dependent arising, and not speculating about oneself. Finally, he goes on to explain the true measure of wisdom:

24a “Monks, knowing thus, seeing thus, would you speak thus:

‘The teacher [Gotama] is respected by us.²²⁵ We speak as we do out of respect for the teacher’?”²²⁶

“No, venerable sir.”

24b “Monks, knowing thus, seeing thus, would you speak thus:

‘The recluse [Gotama] says thus, and we speak thus following the word of the recluse’?”²²⁷

“No, venerable sir.”

24c “Monks, knowing thus, seeing thus, would you turn to another teacher?”

“No, venerable sir.”

24d “Monks, knowing thus, seeing thus, would you resort to²²⁸ the observances [rules], strange arguments, and auspicious and portentous rites and practices²²⁹ of common [worldly] recluses and brahmins, taking them as the essence [the heart of the holy life]?”

“No, venerable sir.”

24e “Do you speak only of what you have known, seen²³⁰ and understood for yourselves?”

“Yes, venerable sir.”

25 “Good, monks! So have you been guided by me with this Dharma, seen here and now [to be realized in this life], timeless, for one to come and see, accessible [leading onward], to be personally known by the wise.

For it is in reference to this that it has been said:

‘Monks, this Dharma is seen here and now, timeless, for one to come and see, accessible, to be personally known by the wise.’”
(M 38.24-25/1:265) = SD 7.10

In the suttas, the word *samaṇa* (“recluse,” sometimes translated as “monk”) generally refers to those following the religious life who are now of the Vedic tradition, as in the common term, *samaṇa, brāhma-*

²²⁴ M 38.24/1:265 = SD 7.10.

²²⁵ This and the next sentence: *sathā no garu, satthu, gāravena ca mayam vādema*. “The teacher is respected by us,” *sathā no garu*, alt tr: “Our teacher is respected/respectable.” Comy glosses *garu* (“respected”) here means *bhārika* (“grievous, burdensome, to be followed unwillingly,” MA 2:309).

²²⁶ The two assertions here [24ab] are conflated into one forming the last of the 10 “doubtful positions” (*kaṅkhāniya-t, thānā*) of **Kesaputtiya S** (A 3.65) = SD 35.4, where it is not regarded as a valid source of spiritual knowledge (A 3.65.3b/1:189)

²²⁷ “And we speak at the instruction of the recluse,” PTS Be Se *samaṇā ca na ca mayam*; Ce (Buddha Jayanti) *samaṇa, vacanena ca mayam*. Here Bodhi proposes that the latter is the better reading, which I follow. “The Recluse” here is the Buddha.

²²⁸ “Would you resort to,” *paccāgaccheyyātha*, or “would you return to, fall back on.”

²²⁹ “The observances [rules], strange arguments, and auspicious and portentous rites and practices,” *vata, kotūhala, maṅgalāni*. The word *kotūhala* or *kutūhala* here is probably confused with *kolāhala*, “tumult, chaos.” *Kotūhala*: “eagerness, excitement; curiosity; excited talk, vehement discussion.” However, as a cpd with the prefix -*maṅgalika*, the reading should be *kotūhala* or *kutūhala*, thus *kotūhala, maṅgala* (“auspicious and portentous rites and practices”) (A 3:439; J 1:373). Cf A 3:206, 439. See A:H 3:151 n4.

²³⁰ “Seen,” *diṭṭham*, ie seen with the eye of wisdom (*paññā, cakkhu*) (MA 2:309).

na (“recluses and brahmins”),²³¹ and *samaṇa* is often applied to the Buddha,²³² or to recluses or religious in general.²³³ Due to the proliferation of religious teachers during the Buddha’s time, it is difficult to know who is wise and accomplished, and who foolish or false: so one has to be wisely discerning in listening to teachers and teachings.

The problem is more complicated today in our society and world where almost any kind of information, especially Buddhist teachings, is easily available in recorded, printed and digital forms, and practically anyone can speak on Buddhism. A speaker should not be deemed proficient merely because of social status, economic success, academic qualification or charismatic personality, but one should discern whether the talk or teaching given is relevant and helpful for Dharma-spirited personal development. A basic guideline for teaching Dharma is given as follows in **the Udāyī Sutta** (A 5.159):

- (1) One should talk on Dharma in a progressive (gradually advanced) manner (*ānupubbi,kathā*).
- (2) One should speak explaining and illustrating the meaning of teachings and the goal of the Dharma (*pariyāya,dassāvī*).
- (3) One should teach out of compassion (*anudayatam paṭicca*).
- (4) One should teach not for worldly gain (*na āmisantaro*).²³⁴
- (5) One should teach neither harming oneself nor others (*attānañ ca parañ ca anupahacca*).²³⁵
(A 5.159/3:184)

In **the Gotamaka Cetiya Sutta** (A 3.123), and again, but briefly, in **the Mahā Sakul’udāyī Sutta** (M 77), the Buddha explains that through his knowledge and vision, he teaches the Dharma in these three ways:

Bhikshus, I teach the Dharma with direct knowledge (*abhiññā*),²³⁶ not without direct knowledge.

Bhikshus, I teach the Dharma with proper cause and reasoning (*sa,nidāna*),²³⁷ not without proper cause and reasoning.

Bhikshus, I teach the Dharma accompanied by wonders (*sappāṭihāriya*), not without wonders.²³⁸

As such, bhikshus, because I teach the Dharma based on direct knowledge, not without direct knowledge...with proper cause and reasoning, not without proper cause and reasoning...with

²³¹ V 2:295; D 1:5, 2:150; A 1:110, 173 f; It 64; Sn 189; or as opposing parties: D 1:13; It 58, 60; Sn p90; V 1:12, 2:110.

²³² As *samaṇa Gotama*, very commonly found throughout the 4 Nikāyas, eg D 1:3; M 1:23; S 1:28; A 1:64; Sn p91, 99; V 1:8, 350.

²³³ D 1:5, 2:150, 3:16, 95 f, 130 f; S 1:45; A 1:67, 110, 173 f; Dh 184, 189; It 64; V 2:295.

²³⁴ In a capitalist money-based economy, this point needs to be carefully discerned. In principle, no fees should be charged for Dharma talks, but donations are given by way of appreciation (*muditā*) and merit-making (*puñña*). However, it is common practice that participants have to pay for attending a course or a seminar so that expenses are covered. In the case of full time lay Dharma teachers or speakers, too, in principle, there should be no charge for Dharma talks, but if necessary a fair amount could be stated as “suggested donation,” so that the audience are free to give what they can or even not at all if they are unable to.

²³⁵ For example, not exalting oneself and belittling others. (AA 3:293)

²³⁶ “Direct knowledge” (*abhiññā*), also called “higher knowledge,” of which there are six (*cha-lābhiññā*) are given in detail in **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.87-98/2:77-86) = SD 8.10. They are: (1) psychic manifestations (*iddhi,-vidhā*); (2) the divine ear (*dibba,sota*); (3) mind-reading (*para,citta,vijānanā*); (4) recollection of past lives (*pubbe,-nivāsānussati*); (5) the divine eye (*dibba,cakkhu*); and the most important is (6) the destruction of the cankers (*āsava-k,khaya,nāṇa*), ie the destruction of the sense-desires (*kām’āsava*), of becoming (*bhav’āsava*), of views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), and ignorance (*avijj’āsava*) (Vbh 334, cf S 2:121) which accompanies the attainment of awakening or arhathood.

²³⁷ “With proper reasoning” (*sa,nidāna*), ie showing cause and effect, or causality (*sappaccaya*) (AA 1:374).

²³⁸ That is, by way of reversing contrary (negative) qualities (*paccanīka,paṭiharaṇena sappāṭihāriyam eva katvā kathemi*, AA 2:374). The wonder or miracle (*pāṭihāriya*) here is of course that of instruction (*anusāsani,pāṭihāriya*), that is, the miracle of conversion for evil to good, as mentioned in **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11.8/1:214) = SD 1.7.

wonders, not without wonders, my advice should be followed (*karanīya*), my teaching should be followed.

And this, bhikshus, is enough for you to be content (*tuttihiyā*), enough for you to be gratified (*attamanatāya*), enough for you to be joyful (*somanassāya*)—

Fully self-awakened is the Blessed One.

Well-taught is the Dharma [the true teaching].

Well-conducted is the Sangha [the holy community of saints]. (A 3.123/1:276) = SD 11.10

As clearly stated in **the Vīmaṃsaka Sutta** (M 47), the Buddha himself invites us to examine and test him to see if he is truly awakened and liberated [Introd 6]. We are not only to measure him by the excellence of his teachings, but also that he lives up to his teachings. This investigation can be done by way of critically looking the Buddha's life (from the Suttas) and his teaching style. If the Buddha himself invites us to examine him, it surely behooves us to investigate other teachers, especially those we choose as our own. After having known that “as they say so they do, as they do so they say” (*yathā, vādī tathā, kārī, yathā, kārī tathā, vādī*),²³⁹ we can live by their teachings, assured that they are reflective of the True Dharma, conducive to spiritual development and liberation.

3b.1 “When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas,...”

The Pali text here is *yadā tumhe Kālāmā attanā'va jāneyyātha*. The Buddha's criterion for rejecting views and ways of knowing, as we can see, is *pragmatic*, but as we shall see in the following passage, it is also *morally ethical*. He is not concerned with philosophical ethics, but with the practical application of the moral life as a basis for further personal development. The appeal here is clearly not to faith, but to wise inference through personal experience and observation. The passage continues as follows:

3b.2 “These things are unwholesome...blamable...censured by the wise... when undertaken and practised, bring about harm and suffering.”

The Pali text here is *ime dhammā akusalā, ime dhammā sāvajjā, ime dhammā viññū, garahitā, ime dhammā samattā samādinna ahitāya dukkhāya samvattantī'ti: atha tumhe Kālāmā pajaheyyātha*. At this point, both the Buddha and the Kālāmas have agreed to a common standard of moral virtue, that is, to say, unwholesome nature and actions have to be rejected for the following reasons.

(1) “**They are blamable**” (*sāvajja*), that is to say, their action entails a breach of the precept. This refers to moral fear (*ottappa*),²⁴⁰ that is, an *other-regarding* moral sense that one's actions affect others, and as such are morally efficacious. Therefore, one is responsible for one's karma.

²³⁹ **Mahā Govinda S** (D 19.11/2:224, 19.26/229); **Pāsādika S** (D 29.29/3:135); **Loka S** (A 4.23.3/2:24 = It 4.13/122); cf Sn 359; **Kakkāru J** (J 326/4:89).

²⁴⁰ “Moral fear,” *ottappa*. The term *ottappa* is derived from *apa* + √TRAP (to be abashed) [Skt **āpatrapya* > *apatrapā* (Trenckner)]. Andersen suggests that this etym must be preferred to that of Childers: **autappya* > *uttāpa*, *ut* + √TAP (heat) (PG 62). Edgerton (BHSD) has *apatrāpya* and the cpd *hrīr-apatrāpya* (P *hiri, ottappa*). The Abhidhamma defines moral shame as “to be ashamed of what one ought to be ashamed of, to be ashamed of performing evil and unwholesome deeds” (Pug 24); cf Dhs:R 18 f. It is one of the 7 noble treasures (*ariya, dhanāni*, DA 2:34; ThaA 240; VvA 113), ie treasures of generosity (*cāga, dhanāni*, D 3:163, 251; A 4:5; VvA 113; cf A 3:53): faith, moral conduct, moral shame, moral fear, learning, generosity, wisdom. Cf Sn 77, 462 (= D 1:168), 719. According to Vism, the proximate cause for moral shame is self-respect, while for moral fear it is respect for others. Out of self-respect (*attāna garu katvā*), one, like the daughter of a good family, rejects evil-doing through *moral shame*. Out of other-respect (*param garu katvā*), one, like a courtesan, rejects evil-doing through *moral fear* (Vism 14.142/-464 f). Moral shame is often paired with moral fear (*ottappa*) (eg M 1:271; S 2:220; A 2:78; It 34; Tikap 61; J 1:127; Vism 221; DhA 3:73), and, as the foundation for morality, called “the world-protectors” (*loka, pāla*, A 1:51), since they are the preconditions for a functional society. The former is sometimes known as self-regarding moral conduct (motivated by the *shame* the deed entails), while the latter as other-regarding moral conduct (motivated by the healthy *fear* of karmic repercussion). As such these two actions are known as the two bright states that protect the world, if not for which “one would neither respect one's mother, nor one's mother's sister, nor one's brother's

(2) “**They are censured by the wise**” (*viññu, garahita*), that is, what others, especially, such awakened beings as the Buddha and so on (Nm 2:422). This refers to moral shame (*hiri*),²⁴¹ that is, a *self-regarding* moral sense, or how others would think of one (for example, that our lack of moral virtue would lead to a loss of respect from others).

(3) “**They bring about harm and suffering**” (*ahitāya dukkhāya samvattanti*), or literally, “they bring about what is not useful (*ahita*) and what is unsatisfactory (*dukkha*).” The humble word *hita* is very interesting: it is an adjective in the form of a past participle of the verb *dahati*, “he puts down, places,” as in the following examples:

<i>mittato daheyya</i>	“would consider (him) a friend”	(S 3:113);
<i>cittam dahati</i>	“he fixes the mind (on an object)”	(A 4:239); and
<i>bālaṃ dahanti mithu añña-m-aññaṃ</i>	“they regard one another as fools”	(Sn 825).

As such, *hita* is often taken to mean “useful, suitable, beneficial, friendly.”²⁴² As a neuter noun, it means “benefit, blessing, good”;²⁴³ and in later times, as a noun, it takes on the meaning of “friend, benefactor” (Mahvs 3, 37).

This third quality clearly has to do with “heedlessness” (*pamāda*). In fact, we find such a triad of moral shame, moral fear, and heedlessness, in **the Abhabba Sutta** (A 10.76):

They are lack of moral shame, lack of moral fear, and heedlessness.²⁴⁴ Without giving up these three things, monks, one would be unable to give up disrespect, intractability²⁴⁵ and evil friendship. (A 10.76.20/5:146) = SD 2.4

“Heedlessness” (*pamāda*), is wrong conduct of the three doors (the body, speech, and the mind) and being habitually subjected to the physical pleasures of the five senses (Vbh 846/350), that is, not working for one’s spiritual development.

Those under the control of the three unwholesome roots—greed, hate, and delusion—“overcome by greed, . . . by hatred, . . . by delusion, his mind controlled by it, will destroy life, take what is not given, violate the women of others, and tell lies, and he will also make others to do likewise, which will bring about harm and suffering for a long time.” That is, they tend to break the five precepts [§§4-6]. But those who are not under not the power of these three roots—those who cultivate the non-greed (charity), non-hate (lovingkindness) and non-delusion (wisdom)—are less likely to break the five precepts [§§10-12]. Keeping well to these precepts, they are very unlikely to be reborn in subhuman realms.

(4) **Criteria for the True Dharma.** Such an admonition is given to the Kālāmas as *lay people*. On a higher level, the Buddha has given various teachings as criteria for the True Teaching. Throughout the Nikāyas, such as in **the Poṭṭhapāda Sutta** (D 9), the Buddha declares that he does not teach those things that do not conduce to “revulsion [disillusionment],²⁴⁶ to dispassion [fading away of lust], to cessation (of

wife, nor one’s teacher’s wife....” (A 1:50). [In his tr, Ñāṇamoli renders *hiri* as “conscience,” but apparently mis-translates *ottappati* as “is ashamed” and *ottappa* as “shame,” Vism:Ñ 524 f.] See **Hiri Ottappa S** (A 2.9/1:50) = SD 2.5.

²⁴¹ “Moral shame,” *hiri* (Skt *hrī*) is a sense of disgust with evil. See prec n.

²⁴² D 3:211 f; A 1:58, 155 f, 2:191; Dh 163.

²⁴³ V 1:4; A 2:96 f, 176; It 78; Sn 233.

²⁴⁴ “Heedlessness,” *pamāda*, ie, wrong conduct of the doors (body, speech and mind) and being habitual subjected to the 5 strands of sense-pleasures (Vbh 846/350), ie not working for one’s spiritual development.

²⁴⁵ “Intractability,” *dovacassatā*, that is, not caring, intractability for admonition, being unresponsive to one’s words (V 4:113 = 185 = Dhs 1325 = Vbh 901/359).

²⁴⁶ On the meaning of **revulsion** (*nibbidā*), see explanation of (5) “the knowledge of the contemplation of revulsion” under (6) “the purification by knowledge and vision” in SD 15.1(11).

suffering), to inner peace [the stilling of defilements], to direct knowledge (of the four noble truths), to awakening, to nirvana,²⁴⁷ but he teaches the four noble truths because they conduce to these states.²⁴⁸

Similarly, when **Upāli** requests a “Dharma in brief” on which to reflect during his solitary retreat, the Buddha, in **the Nibbidāya Sutta** (A 7.79), admonishes thus:

This is what, Upāli, you should know regarding the Dharma:

“These things bring about	
total revulsion [disillusionment] ²⁴⁹	(<i>ekanta,nibbidāya</i>),
dispassion [fading away of lust]	(<i>virāgāya</i>),
cessation (of suffering)	(<i>nirodhāya</i>),
inner peace [the stilling of defilements]	(<i>upasamāya</i>),
direct knowledge (of the four noble truths)	(<i>abhiññāya</i>),
awakening	(<i>sambodhāya</i>),
nirvana	(<i>nibbānāya saṁvattanti</i>).

Of such things, you can be certain:

“This is the Dharma; this is the Vinaya [Discipline]; this is the Teacher’s Teaching.”
(A 7.79/4:143)²⁵⁰

A more detailed version of this “Dharma in brief,” that is, a set of criteria for the True Teaching, is given by the Buddha to **Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī**, on her request for a topic of reflection for her solitary retreat, as recorded in **the Vinaya** (Cv 10.5) and **the (Gotamī) Saṅkhitta Sutta** (A 8.53), thus:

This is what, Gotamī, you should know regarding the Dharma: “These things

bring about dispassion, not passion	(<i>virāgāya saṁvattanti no sarāgāya</i>);
bring about detachment, not attachment	(<i>visaṁyogāya saṁvattanti no saṁyogāya</i>);
bring about lessening (of karma), not accumulation	(<i>apacayāya saṁvattanti no ācayāya</i>);
bring about having fewer wishes, not many wishes	(<i>appicchatāya saṁvattanti no mah’icchatāya</i>);
bring about contentment, not discontent	(<i>santuṭṭhiyā saṁvattanti no asantuṭṭhiyā</i>);
bring about solitude, not socializing	(<i>pavivēkāya saṁvattanti no saṅgaṇikāya</i>);
bring about arousing of energy, not laziness	(<i>viriy’ārambhāya saṁvattanti no kosajjāya</i>);
bring about frugality, not luxury	(<i>subha,ratāya saṁvattanti no dubbha,ratāya</i>).”

Of such things, you can be certain:

“This is the Dharma; this is the Vinaya [Discipline]; this is the Teacher’s Teaching.”
(A 8.53/4:280 f = V:cv 10.5/2:258 f)

In short, false Dharma is *the Buddhism of greed, the Buddhism of hate, and the Buddhism of delusion*. Examples of the false Dharma is very common, and on noticing them, one should keep well clear of them, unless one has the spiritual strength to compassionately and wisely correct them. Here are some local “shadows” cast by false Dharma:

The Buddhism of greed: monastics breaking the celibacy rule; monastics handling money;²⁵¹
money-centred Buddhism; structured fees for blessings and prayer for

²⁴⁷ See **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22.20/1:136 f) = SD 3.13 where an eternalist (such as a Creator-God believer) despairs at such a notion.

²⁴⁸ D 9.28/1:189 = SD 7.14.

²⁴⁹ On the meaning of **revulsion** (*nibbidā*), see explanation of (5) “the knowledge of the contemplation of revulsion” under (6) “the purification by knowledge and vision” in SD 15.1(11).

²⁵⁰ This is stock: D 1:189, 2:251; A 1:30, 3:83, 5:216; U 36.

²⁵¹ See **Money and monastics** = SD 4.19.

the dead; special treatment of rich and influential devotees and neglecting the “lesser” devotees.²⁵²

The Buddhism of hate: labelling other groups as “inferior” (*hīna,yāna*, etc); the conceit that only one’s meditation works and others do not; regarding those one dislikes as being unamenable (“cannot change”) (lacking in compassion); the conceit, “I keep the precepts better than you do”; showing respect to others according to status, skin, etc (measuring others).

The Buddhism of delusion: seeking refuge outside of oneself (such as spirits, amulets and relics); relying on another to be “saved” (a place reserved in heaven, etc); worshipping relics without wisdom and without practising the Dharma,²⁵³ doing “good works” but not keeping the precepts; the conceit, “I meditate better than you do”; respecting the teacher above the Teaching,²⁵⁴ misquoting the Dharma (vague Buddhism).

The True Dharma cannot be found outside of oneself, but is found only within oneself.²⁵⁵ One has to close one’s eyes and see the inner stillness and clarity. One constantly reflects on impermanence of both oneself and the world so that one is liberated in this life itself.²⁵⁶

4 “What do you think, Kālāmas...” [also §§5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13]

These are the passages of emphatic affirmation (*avadhāraṇa*)²⁵⁷ [Comy 7], and are of two types: the first set of four consecutive passages (§§4-7) affirms what are *unwholesome*, while the second set (§§10-13) affirms what are *wholesome*.

In the following section [Comy 7] below, the Buddha emphatically affirms what is morally unwholesome.

7 “What do you think, Kālāmas... So indeed it is to us in this matter.” [Also §13]

This whole section reads:

“What do you think, Kālāmas, are these things wholesome or unwholesome?”

“Unwholesome, bhante.”

“Blamable or not blamable?”

“Blamable, bhante.”

“Censured or praised by the wise?”

“Censured by the wise, bhante.”

“These things, when undertaken and practised, do they bring about harm and suffering?”

“These things, bhante, when undertaken and practised, bring about harm and suffering for a long time.

So indeed it is to us in this matter.” (*evam no ettha hotī ti*) [§7]

The Udāna Commentary, in its explanation of the term *evam*, gives this passage as an example of an emphatic affirmation (*avadhāraṇa*) (UA 7). This is a vital stage in the “word” (*pada*) learning process, so that the text (*vyañjana*) is understood in context (*attha*). The exercise begins with partial affirmation of §4 (on the unwholesomeness of greed),

²⁵² See eg **Dharma-ending Age** = SD 1.10.

²⁵³ See **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (SD 16) = SD 9 esp (7ijk) & Appendices 1-2.

²⁵⁴ See eg **Gāraṇa S** (S 6.2/1:138-140) = **Uruvelā S 1** (A 4.21/2:20 f) = SD 12.3.

²⁵⁵ See **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16/2.26) = SD 9, also (6c).

²⁵⁶ See eg (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225) = SD 16.7.

²⁵⁷ See UA 7, commentary on *evam*.

§5 (on the unwholesomeness of hate), and
 §6 on the unwholesomeness of delusion,
 and climaxes with the full affirmation of §7.

In repeating these key points, the Kālāmas not only show their *understanding* of the points, but also their *acceptance* of them. Having established this consensus, the Buddha goes on to the next stage of his admonition.

See also Comy 4.

8 “It is because of this, Kālāmas, that I say...”

After exhorting the Kālāmas on the three unwholesome roots, that they are to be rejected, the Buddha declares that it is for this reason that he has spoken on the ten doubtful points. That is to say, these points are not as a summary rejection of any teaching, nor as an excuse for a *carte-blanc* or “self-assembled” Buddhism, but as a reminder and criteria for testing the moral worthiness of a statement—that they are not blameworthy, not censured by the wise, and do not cause one harm and suffering—before accepting it.

And again at the close of the section, the Buddha reiterates: “So I have spoken; it is for this reason that I have spoken.” [§8]

9b “When you know for yourselves, Kālāmas, ‘These things are wholesome... not blamable...praised by the wise...bring good and happiness.’”

This is the positive counterpart of the unwholesome qualities (that are to be rejected) [§3b & Comy 3b.2]. None of the ten doubtful points, singly or otherwise, can really tell us the moral worthiness of a statement. One has to examine them for oneself whether they are wholesome, not blamable, praised by the wise and bring good and happiness—that is, it is personally and collectively wholesome. Otherwise, it should be rejected. [§§3b.1]

13 “What do you think, Kālāmas,...”

This section comprises the emphatic affirmation of the morally wholesome views of statements. The approach is just the opposite of that explained above [Comy 7 “What do you think, Kālāmas,...”].

14 “It is because of this, Kālāmas, that I say...”

This section is the positive counterpart of §8. After exhorting the Kālāmas on the three wholesome roots, and that they are to be accepted, the Buddha declares that it is for this reason that he has spoken on the ten doubtful points. That is to say, these points are not as a summary rejection of any teaching, nor as an excuse for a *carte-blanc* or “self-assembled” Buddhism, but as a reminder and criteria for testing the moral worthiness of a statement—that they are wholesome, praised by the wise, bring one good and happiness—before accepting it.

And again at the close of the section, the Buddha reiterates: “So I have spoken; it is for this reason that I have spoken.” [§14]

Let us now look at the relevant passages as a whole. §§4-6 respectively shows that through being motivated by greed, hate or delusion, one breaks the five precepts and “makes others to do likewise.” And this will bring one harm and suffering (that is, karmic fruits) for a long time. This point is emphatically reaffirmed in §7. The Buddha reiterates his reasons mentioning the ten doubtful points in that they should be rejected if they lack moral worth [§8-9a]. The positive aspects, that is, the moral wholesomeness of the ten points are then reaffirmed [§§9b-14].

We see here a progressive teaching that first points out what are to be rejected, and then what are to be accepted. This is the section on moral training, of which a more detailed exposition is found in **the Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta** (S 55.7), which instructs on the proper practice of moral virtue, that is, one (1) refrains from breaking the precepts, (2) one exhorts others from breaking the precepts, and (3) over gives

positive strokes to those for keeping the precepts.²⁵⁸ §§10-13 below *affirms* the wholesome roots: this affirmative practice is elaborated in **the Sāleyyaka Sutta** (M 41), that is, while not breaking any precept, one goes on to act on it positive virtue, summarized here:

	Precepts	Virtue
Body	(1) avoids killing or harming living beings	non-violent, actively shows compassion to all
	(2) avoids taking the not-given	[shows generosity individually and with others]
	(3) avoids indulging in sexual misconduct	[practises contentment]
Speech	(4) avoids speaking falsehood	speaks the truth wisely and at the right time
	(5) avoids speaking divisively	unites others and rejoice in concord
	(6) avoids harsh words	blameless and pleasant speech
	(7) avoids useless talk	beneficial talk and Dharma-spirited words
Mind	(8) avoids covetousness	[practises detachment and letting go]
	(9) avoids ill will	practises lovingkindness
	(10) avoids wrong view	understands karma, rebirth, moral virtue

Table 14 The precepts and their virtues

(M 41.11-14/1:287 f) = SD 5.7

This moral training is not an end in itself, but form the vital basis for mental training, here stated as the cultivation of the divine abodes, which follow.

15a.1 The divine abodes

The Kālāmas, having understood and accepted these basic principles of moral virtue [§§3b-14], are now ready for mental cultivation, which understandably consists in the four divine abodes (*brahma-vihāra*), those qualities conducive to beneficent leadership and wholesome community life; that is to say, lovingkindness, compassion, altruistic joy and equanimity. These practices lead to the “breaking of barriers” between self and other, and so greatly helps in the forging of spiritual friendship and a wholesome community.

The Buddha has very good reasons for teaching the Kālāmas the cultivation of the divine abodes as their first spiritual exercise. First of all, it is a pre-Buddhist practice that the Buddha has adopted as it is not against his teachings. Secondly, the divine abodes help in the cultivation of inner stillness and wholesome social emotions. The cultivation of divine abode serves as a fertile ground of a still mind for developing insight in due course.

15a.2 ‘thus free from covetousness, free from ill will, unconfused, fully aware, mindful...’

In Pali, this passage runs *evam vigatābhijjho vigatāvīyāpādo asammūlho sampajāno paṭissato*. From the context, this short but significant passage clearly refers to the overcoming of the five mental hindrances, thus:

²⁵⁸ S 55.7/5:352-356 = SD 1.5.

<u>The mindfulness formula</u>	<u>The five mental hindrances</u>
(1) Free from covetousness	sense-desire (<i>kāma-c, chanda</i>) is overcome.
(2) Free from ill will	ill will (<i>vyāpāda</i>) is overcome.
(3) Unconfused	sloth and torpor (<i>thīna, middha</i>) is overcome.
(4) Fully aware	restlessness and worry (<i>uddhacca, kukkucca</i>) is overcome.
(5) Mindful	doubt (<i>vicikicchā</i>) is overcome.

The relationships (pairings) between the two sets can be graphically represented thus:

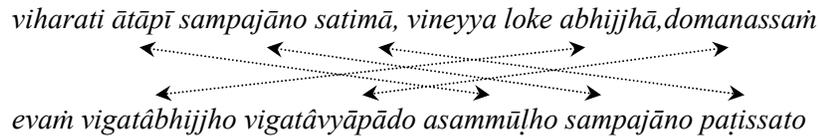


Fig 15a.2 Mindfulness formula and the hindrances

The first two factors of the mindfulness formula form the well known dvandva (copulative compound), *abhijjhā, domanassa* (covetousness and displeasure), commonly found in the important satipatthana stock phrase: *viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassam*, “he dwells (*viharati*) exertive [ardent], clearly aware, mindful,²⁵⁹ <observing the body in the body; feeling in the feelings; mind in the mind; dharmas in the dharmas>, putting away covetousness and displeasure for the world.”²⁶⁰

The Commentaries on the Satipatthāna Sutta say that the dvandva, *abhijjhā, domanassa*, “covetousness and displeasure [discontent],”²⁶¹ signifies the first two hindrances (*nīvaraṇā*)—sensual desire and ill will—the principal hindrances to be overcome for the practice to succeed.²⁶² Although “covetousness and displeasure” is taken by the Sutta Commentaries to refer to only the first two mental hindrances in the early suttas, the dvandva is clearly a synecdoche (short form) for all the five hindrances (*pañca, nīvaraṇā*) themselves, whose removal leads to mindfulness (*sati*), mental concentration (*samādhi*) and dhyana (*jhāna*). **The Netti-p, pakarāṇa**, on the other hand, points out, four of the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) are present in the same basic satipatthana formula:

ātāpī, that is to say, the faculty of effort [energy];
sampajāno, that is to say, the faculty of wisdom;
satimā, that is to say, the faculty of mindfulness;
vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassam, that is, the faculty of samadhi. (Nett §481 f/82 f)

It is clear then that *abhijjhā, domanassa* refers to the mental hindrances: for when they are all overcome, even if temporarily, the result is samadhi.

The remaining opposing pairs of the mindfulness formula and the five mental hindrances are exact antonyms. However, in terms of actual meditation practice, we can see that they do work together *as a set*. Of course, we could pedantically form almost perfect antonymous pairs with (3) unconfused against doubt, (4) fully aware against restlessness and worry, and (5) mindful against sloth and torpor. The form is that the mental hindrances are overcome *altogether*, not one by one. Another interesting point to note is

²⁵⁹ “Exertive, clearly aware, mindful,” *ātāpī sampajāno satimā* (D 3:58, 77, 141, 211, 276 = M 1:56 ff (MA 1:243), 2:11 = S 5:141-143 (SA 3:180) = A 4:300, 457 = Pm 41 (PmA 175) = Vbh 193 f (VbhA 219 f). These stock terms are def at Vbh 194, 196 = 202; Vism 3; DA 363; MA 1:244; SA 1:204; AA 2:42; ItA 1;105; SnA 157; ApA 310.

²⁶⁰ *Tasmā-t-īha taṃ bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassam*. See **Satipatthāna Suttas** = SD 13.1(4.2), esp 4.2e.

²⁶¹ Analayo, *Satipatthāna: The direct path to realization*, has “desire and discontent” (2003:3). See also Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2001:49 f.

²⁶² DA 3:758 = MA 1:243; SA 3:272.

that here (in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta) the phrase *vigatābhijjho vigata,vyāpādo asammūlho sampajāno patissato* is mentioned in connection with the four divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*), and this is still a part of the meditation process. The basic satipatthana formula *viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjā, domanassam*, however, describes the result of a hindrance-free mind that is just a moment, as it were, from dhyana. Indeed, if the divine abodes is cultivated properly, the next stage would be described by the basic satipatthana formula. The divine abodes practice can lead one to dhyana.

15a.3 “Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells pervading the whole world with a mind (of lovingkindness, ...of compassion,...of altruistic joy,...of equanimity) that is vast, great, boundless, free from enmity, free from ill will.”

Pali: *Iti uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabb'attatāya*²⁶³ *sabbāvantam lokam <mettā, sahatena, ... karuṇā, sahatena, ... muditā, sahatena, ... upekkhā, sahatena> cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamaṇena averena avyāpajjhena pharivā viharati.*

This important refrain repeats at the end of each of the four passages of the divine abodes, showing how each abode becomes fully developed. In simple terms, the phrase “**above, below, across, everywhere**” (*uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi*) refers to the directional radiating (*pharivā*) of the divine abode. This divine quality should be cultivated “**to everyone as well as to himself**” (*sabb'attatāya*): the quality is only total and boundless when it also includes oneself. For, one cannot pervade the universe (meaning both the world of beings and one's awareness of that world) if one does not have that quality oneself.²⁶⁴

The phrase “**a mind...vast, great, boundless, free from enmity, free from ill will**” (*cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamaṇena averena avyāpajjhena*) describes a meditator who is *fully focussed*. The word “vast” or “bountiful” (*vipula*) means he has attained samadhi or full concentration, and as such is “great” (*mahaggata*), that is, free (least temporarily) of all the mental hindrances,²⁶⁵ and thereby attained to dhyana. Only such a mind can truly be “boundless” or “measureless” (*appamana*) because, at least momentarily, going beyond conceit, the meditator *does not measure anyone but sees all beings as they really are*, without regarding anyone as a stranger or an enemy, or harbouring any negative thought: he is “free from enmity, free from ill will” (*averena avyāpajjhena*).

God-religions, especially Christianity, claim to have a “world vision” to evangelize all men out of “Christian love,” but the reality is that the *power mode* is at work here. Such a view is rooted in the idea that one's God is the best, hence, one, too, is supreme amongst amongsts and should dominate it. In the Buddhist conception of life, non-humans (such as animals) are included, too, and they too *need* liberation and *can* find liberation. A sentiment like “Christian” love has, by its very definition, to be limited, and as such cannot be universal or selfless love (agape). Lovingkindness, on the other hand, is *not* “Buddhist” love, but simply an unconditional acceptance of all beings.

In being *unconditional* in one's lovingkindness, one does not impose one's values or even salvation upon another. One simply sees in *all* being (not just humans) their innate ability to realize their true nature and so be liberated. They are not born in “sin,” but in *ignorance*, and it is this ignorance that fuels *craving*, that is, seeking for fulfillment in the external world based on the false notion that there is an unchanging entity (a soul, etc). If ideas can heal, that just such an idea of unconditional love is more healing than the God-idea has ever been throughout mankind's history.

15b “his mind without enmity thus, without ill will thus, uncorrupted thus, purified thus—wins these four self-assurances right here in this life”

Pali: *Evam avera, citto evam avyāpajjha, citto evam asaṅkhiliṭṭha, citto evam visuddha, citto, tassa diṭṭh'eva dhamme cattāro assāsā adhigatā honti.*

²⁶³ For a grammatical analysis, see §15a(1)n above.

²⁶⁴ On how this practice can lead to spiritual liberation, see **Brahma, vihāra S** (A 10.208/5:299) = SD 2.10.

²⁶⁵ See Intro 5.3(2)n.

1 HOW TO FULLY BENEFIT FROM THE FOUR SELF-ASSURANCES. This sentence shows the spiritual progression from the divine abodes practice to the benefitting the four self-assurances. This is a subtle point often missed if not for a close study. That is to say, to truly benefit by way of the four self-assurances, is not merely a *belief* in karma and rebirth—this would be an intellectual shift, like believing in a God-idea! So what else is needed here?

To fully benefit from the four self-assurances, one must go through an emotional shift (or a positive change of heart), here by way of the four divine abodes: one becomes a person of lovingkindness, compassion, altruistic joy and equanimity (or, at least of lovingkindness). How does this emotional shift occur? We have already seen how the suppression of the hindrances, even if only temporary, leads to the attainment of dhyana [15a.2]. It is only when we have attained at least the first dhyana that we will truly experience the full feeling of lovingkindness without barriers.

In fact, the cultivation of the first three divine abodes—lovingkindness, compassion and altruistic joy—can bring us dhyanas right up to the third level. The fourth divine abode, equanimity, can bring us to the fourth dhyana.²⁶⁶ One who has experienced truly knows what happiness really is. Happiness (*sukha*) not only helps one to get samadhi during meditation, but it is the best prevention against breaking the precepts! One who is truly happy does not think of harming himself or others, and he sustains a wholesome ambience wherever he goes. It is such a person who fully benefits from the four self-assurances.

2 HOW THE UNAWAKENED CAN BENEFIT FROM THE SELF-ASSURANCES. Even an unawakened being who has mere faith in karma and rebirth benefits from the four self-assurances. The reason is very simple: to believe in karma means that you accept the fact that your conscious actions are morally efficacious, that is, you are responsible for your actions. To believe in rebirth means that you live with the notion that in some way, your past karma has contributed to your present being, and that the karmic seeds you now create can fruit again in future lives. So how you live—how you conduct yourself through thought, word and deed—have a direct impact on the quality of your life to come. Believing in karma and rebirth, as such, provides the incentive for quality control over your life. This is, in fact, another way of talking about living a morally virtuous life.

As noted a number of times before,²⁶⁷ moral virtue forms the basis for effective mental training [Intro 3.5]: it is easier to meditate if you keep your precepts and practise their virtues, too [Comy 14]. Even if you think you are not a “saint,” that maybe your moral virtue is not as sterling as you would have liked it to be, you can still, indeed, it is to your great advantage, to practise a common form of meditation called “mindfulness practice” (*satipaṭṭhāna*).²⁶⁸ A very simple but effective form of mindfulness practice is described in **the Dīgha, jānu Sutta** (A 8.54) as the layman’s accomplishment of wisdom (*paññā, sampadā*) as follows:

Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family is wise, possesses wisdom directed to (noting) the rising and falling away (of phenomena) that is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of suffering. (A 8.54/4:285) = SD 5.10

The benefit of this practice is clearly better than even that of the divine abodes, as attested by **the Velāma Sutta** (A 9.20):

And, householder, even though the brahmin Velāma gave those great gifts, and even if he were to cultivate a heart of lovingkindness for just as long as it takes to tug at the cow’s teat (to

²⁶⁶ See Vism 9.119/324 (where the “highest limit” of each abode is discussed); also *Bhāvanā* = SD 15.1 (Diagram 2). See **Metta, saḥagata S** (S 46.54/5:115-121) = SD 10.11 esp Intro (3) (Liberation through the divine abodes).

²⁶⁷ Intro 5.1; Comy 3b.1; Comy 14.

²⁶⁸ *Sati’paṭṭhāna* usu tr as “focus of mindfulness,” but here I am taking it as a simple daily practice as taught in the “clear knowledge” section of **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.4/2:292) = SD 13.2 & **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.8/1:57) = SD 13.3.

milk it), greater would be the fruit if he were to cultivate the perception of impermanence for even the moment of a finger-snap! (A 9.20.11/4:395 f) = SD 16.6²⁶⁹

In short, you can still benefit from the self-assurances even as an ordinary person who makes every effort to live a morally virtuous life and keep your mind healthy.

16 The four self-assurances

The Buddha's four self-assurances are the best spiritual insurance that any religious or philosophical system can ever give. They are best not in the theoretical or philosophical sense (although this may well be the case, too), but in a practical and beneficial way. They are the ground rules by which one can live together as a healthy family, community and society. Unlike Pascal's wager [Intro 7], the four self-assurances or spiritual solaces (*assāsa*), have a gentle and compassionate tone, giving the thinker a free choice of what to believe. At the same time, the Buddha emphatically affirms the central place of moral virtue.

Moral virtue and ethical living make communal living and society possible. In the Buddhist view, morals and ethics are founded on the principle of the "world protectors" (*loka,pāla*), that is, moral shame and moral fear, where one's actions are neither "blamable," entailing bad karma (one has moral fear), nor "censured by the wise" (one has moral shame) [3b.2]. Without moral virtue, neither civilization nor society is possible. Without some level of social organization, no God-idea is possible: for the God-idea is always closely associated with political power. Moral virtue is necessary for social order and personal development, whether one believes in a God or not. Understandably the four self-assurances clearly stand way above Pascal's wager which does not allow one any choice at all!

17 The Kālāmas' exultation In a well known stock phrase, the Blessed One is described as teaching in a progressive affective sequence:²⁷⁰ he is said to have "instructed (*sandasseti*), inspired (*samādapeti*), roused (*samuttejeti*) and gladdened (*sampahaṃseti*)...with a Dharma talk."²⁷¹ We can actually see the sequence of the Buddha discourse here in the Kesa,puttiya Sutta in this manner:

instructed	(<i>sandasseti</i>)§3a:	the 10 doubtful points;
		§§3b-9a: the unwholesome roots (to be rejected).
inspired	(<i>samādapeti</i>)	§9b-15a: the wholesome roots (to be accepted).
roused	(<i>samuttejeti</i>)	§15b-16: the 4 divine abodes.
gladdened	(<i>sampahaṃseti</i>)	§17: the 4 self-assurances.

The point here is that one teaches not merely to give knowledge (the cognitive leap), but also joy (the affective openness).

18 The Kālāmas go for refuge

With minor variations, this section is a stock passage found throughout the Nikāyas, showing that the listener or audience has understood and appreciates the Buddha's or a noble disciple's teaching.²⁷²

1 "Excellent, master Gotama! Excellent, master Gotama!" (*Abhikkantaṃ bho Gotama, abhikkantaṃ bho gotama*).²⁷³ The exclamation "excellent!" (*abhikkanta*) reflects the Kālāmas' awe and

²⁶⁹ "For even the moment of a finger-snap," *accharā,saṅghāta,mattam*. Also in **Cūḷ'accharā S** (A 1.6.3-5/A 1:10), in the same context of lovingkindness. See SD 16.6 Introd (2-4).

²⁷⁰ The contents of the Buddha's teachings can be said to comprise of a progressive cognitive sequence, otherwise known as "the progressive talk" (*ānupubbī,kathā*): see Intro 3.1.

²⁷¹ V 1:18; D 1:126, 149, 2:86, 98, 109, 110, 127, 3:27, 209; M 1:209, 354, 2:139, 3:155; S 2:215, 3:95., 4:183, 5:155; A 3:380, 4:67, 118, 307 (x2), 5:122, 125; U 39, 82, 87.

²⁷² For traditional comys, see eg DA 1:227-230; MA 1:129-137; SA 1:135 f; AA 2:105-107; SnA 1:155-157; UA 286 f = UA:M 746-749; BA 122 f = BA:H 174 f.

joy—in short, wonder—at the Buddha’s teaching, making it what we might call a “religious experience” for them. As the Buddha has declared in **the Gotamaka Cetiya Sutta** (A 3.123): “Bhikshus, I teach the Dharma accompanied by wonders (*sappāṭihāriya*), not without wonders.” [Comy 3a(10)]. This is a classic example of the greatest of miracles, that of instruction (*anusāsani, pāṭihāriya*).²⁷⁴

It is interesting that they address the Buddha by his clan name, Gotama, which suggests a sense of cordiality they have towards him. This would not show such familiarity if they were ordained monastics (monks or nuns). However, it also means that, if they have attained any level of realization, it would be only stream-winning. See (8) below where they go for refuge “for life.”

2 “Just as if, master Gotama, one were to place upright what had been overturned” (*seyyathāpi bho Gotama nikkujjitam vā ukkujjeyya*). Notice that the Kālāmas’ uninhibited exultation is expressed in various colourful imageries, rather than in measured conceptual evaluations. This is the first of four consecutive similes in this stock passage.

Soon after the Great Awakening, Brahmā Sahampati approaches the Buddha and invites him to teach the Dharma to the world, reminding the Buddha that false teachings are widespread to the detriment of the many, and that there are many “with little dust in their eye” who would benefit from spiritual teachings:

In the past there has appeared (until now) in Magadha
An impure Dharma devised by those still tainted.
Throw open this door to the Deathless!
Let them hear the Dharma discovered by the Stainless One!²⁷⁵

3 “Or, were to reveal what was hidden” (*paṭicchannam vā vivareyya*). The Commentaries²⁷⁶ say that since the passing of the previous Buddha, Kassapa, the Teaching was forgotten, “hidden by the thicket of wrong views,” and our Buddha now has revealed it again. All the Buddhas teach the same Dharma, leading to the same goal. In **the Uppāda Sutta** (A 3.134), the Buddha declares that whether Buddhas arise or not, it remains a fact that the world is impermanent and suffering, and that all things are not self.²⁷⁷ The Buddha, having arisen fully awaken in this world, declares these truths to it.²⁷⁸

4 “Or, were to show the way to one who was lost” (*mūlhassa vā maggam ācikkheyya*). The meaning here is that to those who have fallen into wrong ways, the Buddha directs them to the right one by disclosing the way to heaven (through the four divine abodes) [§15] and to liberation (such as through understanding the nature of impermanence) [Intro 5.3(2)]. The path imagery is a popular one in Buddhism: the way to liberation is known as the noble eightfold path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*).²⁷⁹

The Nagara Sutta (S 12.65) gives the famous parable of the city, where nirvana is represented as a lost frontier city, linked by an ancient path through deep jungle. The city is still inhabited by wise citizens (the saints), and the ancient path (the noble eightfold path) is rediscovered by a man who rushes back to civilization to tell others to clear the path and renovate the city (that is, to practise the True Teaching).²⁸⁰

5 “Or, were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms” (*andha, kāre vā tela, pajjotam dhāreyya, cakkhumanto rūpāni dakkhintī ti*). In teaching the Dharma, the Buddha is like one who brings a bright lamp to one lost in the dark or half-light, that is, bringing understanding to one who was lost in the darkness or dimness of delusion. This imagery again aptly shows how

²⁷³ Here I follow Ee (*peyyāla* based on A 1:184) & Se, but Ce has *abhikkantam bhante, abhikkantam bhante Gotama*.

²⁷⁴ See **Kevaladdha S** (D 11.8/1:214) = SD 1.7.

²⁷⁵ 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.

²⁷⁶ For traditional comys, see eg DA 1:227-230; MA 1:129-137; SA 1:135 f; AA 2:105-107; KhA 16-22 = KhA:Ñ 9-16; SnA 1:155-157; UA 286 f = UA:M 746-749; BA 122 f = BA:H 174 f.

²⁷⁷ *Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā, sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā, sabbe dhammā anattā*: see also Dh 277-279.

²⁷⁸ A 3.134/1:286. On how the Buddha teaches the 3 characteristics, see **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22.22-29/1:137-139) = SD 3:13.

²⁷⁹ See eg **Mahā Cattārisaka S** (M 117/3:71-78) = SD 6.10.

²⁸⁰ S 12.65/2:104-107 = SD 14.2.

the Dharma works: the truth is always there, and we only need to open our inner eye to see it. To elaborate on the lamp imagery, one could add that the true lamp is one's own mind, and the Buddha's teaching is the flame that lights it up so that we become lamps unto ourselves.

6 “In the same way master Gotama has, in numerous ways, made the Dharma clear”

(*Evam eva bhotā Gotamena aneka,pariyāyena dhammo pakāsito*). In a stock passage, it is said that “the Blessed One instructed (*sandassetvā*), inspired (*samādapetvā*), roused (*samuttejetvā*) and gladdened (*sampahamsetvā*)... with a Dharma talk.”²⁸¹ The Commentaries²⁸² explain this action sequence: by instructing, the Buddha dispels the listener's *delusion*; by inspiring him, *heedlessness* is dispelled; by rousing him, *indolence* is dispelled; and by gladdening, brings the practice to a *conclusion*. In short, when we teach Dharma to benefit others, we should do our best to *bring instruction, inspiration, motivation and jubilation* to the audience. These four qualities,²⁸³ according to **the Ānanda Sutta** (A 3.61), form the sixth or last of the ideal skills of a Dharma speaker.²⁸⁴

7 “We go to master Gotama for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks” (*Ete mayam bhavantam Gotamam saraṇam gacchāma, dhammañ ca bhikkhu,saṅghañ ca*).

When religious conversion is imposed on another in a situation where “one believes so that one can understand,” the convert is but a shadow of the faith, blindly, unthinkingly and lifelessly following its every gesture, and knowing no other. Here we see the Kālāmas, having understood the Buddha's teaching, jubilantly celebrate their self-realized faith through knowing, and take refuge in the Three Jewels.²⁸⁵

8 “May master Gotama remember us as lay followers who have gone to him for refuge from this day forth for life” (*Upāsake no bhavam Gotamo dhāretu ajja-t-agge paṇ'upete saraṇam gate'ti*).

Considering that this stock formula says that the Kālāmas (or anyone else) request the Buddha to be a witness to their going for refuge “for life” (*paṇ'upete*, alternately, “as long as life lasts”), which reflects the depth of their faith. It is likely that this is also an occasion of the attaining of stream-winning.²⁸⁶ In that case, such a refuge-going would be regarded as “supramundane” (*lok'uttara saraṇa,gamana*) (Dh 190-192). If the refuge-goer is still a worldlying, then the refuge-going is still “mundane” (*lokiya saraṇa,-gamana*) (D 20.4/2:255).²⁸⁷

The Commentaries²⁸⁸ mention another two kinds of refuge-going, by way of breach (*duvidho saraṇa,-gamana,bhedo*), namely: the blameworthy (*sāvajja*) and the blameless (*anavajja*), and they both apply only to worldly refuge-goers, that is, those who have not attained any spiritual state. The blameworthy refuge-goer is one who, having gone for refuge, “turns to another teacher,” that is, either does not keep up a moral life, or converts to another religion. This of course refers to the mundane refuge-goers who are still weak in their faith. The blameless refuge-goer is one who remains so until death, but does not as yet attain any spiritual state.

In most cases, however, refuge-going is a mark of profound joy (*pasāda*) and faith (*saddhā*), and as such it greatly conduces to one's spiritual development. This is because they give the Three Jewels the highest priorities in their lives, thinking: “This is my refuge, this is my final goal” (*esa me saraṇam esa*

²⁸¹ V 1:18; D 1:126, 149, 2:86, 98, 109, 110, 127, 3:27, 209; M 1:209, 354, 2:139, 3:155; S 2:215, 3:95., 4:183, 5:155; A 3:380, 4:67, 118, 307 (x2), 5:122, 125; U 39, 82, 87.

²⁸² Eg DA 1:293; cf VA 1:65; MA 2:35.

²⁸³ See LS Cousins, in his review of *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (tr Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi) in JBE 4, 1997: 272, where gives a slightly different listing of the above.

²⁸⁴ A 3.61/3:361 f. See **Sīla,sampanna S** (It 4.1.5/107), where these qualities are part of a morally virtuous Dharma teacher that would benefit others.

²⁸⁵ On going for refuge, see SD 3.1-3.

²⁸⁶ Comy to **Bhaddiya S** (A 4.193/2:190-194) = SD 35.10 (which contains the same 10 doubtful points & §§3b-15a) says that at the conclusion of the discourse, Bhaddiya becomes a stream-winner. (AA 3:173)

²⁸⁷ These 2 types of refuge-going (*duvidham saraṇa,gamanam*) are mentioned in Comys, eg MA 1:132, 134 & KhA 17.

²⁸⁸ Eg MA 1:135; KhA 17.

me parāyananī).²⁸⁹ The Commentaries record various ways by which the early disciples go for refuge, the main ways of which are as follows:

Method	Formula	Example
1. By personal undertaking (<i>upeta</i>)	“Bhante, we go to the Blessed One and the Dharma as refuge. May the Blessed One remember us as lay followers.” ²⁹⁰	Tapassu & Bhallika (V 1:4)
2. By becoming a pupil (<i>sissa, bhāv’-upagamana</i> .)	“Bhante, the Blessed One is my teacher; I am a disciple [listener] (<i>sāvaka</i>).” ²⁹¹	Mahā Kassapa (S 2:220)
3. By inclination (<i>tap, poṇatta</i>)	“When this was spoken, the brahmin Brahmāyu rose from his seat, arranged his robe to one side, and approached the Blessed One. Holding his palms lotuswise, he made the inspired utterance, <i>Namo tassa bhavavato arhato sammā, sambuddhassa... (×3)</i> .” ²⁹²	Brahmāyu (M 2:140)
4. By final goal (<i>tap, parāyanatā</i>)	“I shall wander from village to village, from city to city, worshipping the self-awakened one and the excellence of the Dharma.” ²⁹³	Āḷavaka (Sn 192)

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²⁸⁹ KhA 17,8; cf 18,33.

²⁹⁰ *Ete mayam bhante bhagavantam saraṇam gacchāma dhammañ ca upāsake no bhagavā dhāretu.* (VA 1:230-234; MA 1:133-137)

²⁹¹ *Sathā me bhante bhagavā, sāvako ‘ham asmī ti.* (VA 1:230-234; MA 1:133-137)

²⁹² *Evam vutte Brahmāyu brāhmaṇo uṭṭhāy’āsanā ekaṃsaṃ uttarā, saṅgaṃ karitvā yena bhagavā ten’añjalim paṇāmetvā tikkhattuṃ udānaṃ udānesi: namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā, sambuddhassa... (×3).* (VA 1:230-234; MA 1:133-137)

²⁹³ *So ahaṃ vicarissāmi gāmaṃ gāmaṃ purā puram namassamāno sambuddham dhammassa ca sudhammatan ti.* (KhA 16 f)

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You don’t need to take drugs to hallucinate:
Blur thinking, blur info, blur friends—
and those who claim to know God—can do worse.

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