

## Commentary on the Udana

NOTE: this commentary was drawn together during a period in the Sutra Study group in which we were reading through the Khuddaka Nikaya ("miscellaneous" suttas). We used the John Ireland translation-- here's a [link](#) to it. There's also a partial translation on the [Access to Insight](#) website, [here](#).

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1:1 Both this and 1:2 – 1:3 emphasize that dependent origination was an important part of the Buddha's enlightenment. However, it wasn't immediately at the point of enlightenment that the Nidanas were discovered, but at the end of the seven days following the moment of enlightenment.

I'm also keeping in mind that the Nidanas are but a single aspect—one particular application—of dependent origination. Thus paticcasamuppada could very well be the essential component of enlightenment, while the Nidanas would arise with further contemplation.

1:4 That a brahmin is *made*, not born, is an early element in the Buddha's teachings.

1:5 Similar to 1:4 in that a brahmin is made. The question is in fact asked by a monk who was brahmin by birth, but now would not be considered a brahmin unless he had reached at least the first stage of awakening (stream-entry.)

1:6 This one seems odd on the surface—why shouldn't Kassapa accept the offerings of the devas? But for a monk it is critical that he not be supported by anyone, that he live completely free from services. Therefore he went on his alms-round.

1:7 The 'goblin' (yakka) attempts to frighten the Buddha but cannot. The brahmin who has gone beyond the five aggregates cannot be bothered by the yakka.

This reminds me of the Metta Sutta:

By not holding to fixed views,  
The pure-hearted one, having clarity of vision,  
Being freed from all sense-desires,  
Is not born again into this world.

Remember that the Metta sutta was spoken by the Buddha in response to a group of monks who were afraid of the sounds of the forest at night.

1:8 This is another sutta like 1:6 that emphasizes the solitary, unencumbered nature of the monk (as opposed to the householder.) The former wife of Sangamaji was being thoughtless and rude by shoving the child at him. Sangamaji is neither joyful nor sad regarding her: he is freed from ties (including, one gathers, those regarding family.)

1:9 Direction reaction against brahmanic and vedic practices. There is nothing gained by plunging into cold water or doing fire worship or sacrifice.

Contrast: Christian practice of baptism. It is the ceremony that has meaning, but not the actual water itself per se. How does this bear with this? Is the water truly significant?

Note that some Christian schools say that during Communion the bread and wine actually *become* Christ's flesh and blood. (Typically Catholic, in fact.) This gives it particular significance—almost fetishistic from the Buddhist point of view.

At any rate, the Udana itself is as clear a rejection of the notion of baptism to be found. In the Ireland translation:

Not by water is one cleansed,  
Many people bathe in this.  
In whom is truth and Dhamma,  
He is cleansed, he is a brahmin.

1:10 This one is extremely important. This is a teaching on pure mindfulness:

In the seen will be merely what is seen;  
In the heard will be merely what is heard;  
In the sensed will be merely what is sensed;  
In the cognized will be merely what is cognized." (Ireland)

Presumably "in the sensed" stands for smell, taste, touch, so we're covering all six of the sense bases here.

The Woodward translation garbles the critical paragraph that follows this. Ireland is a little better, but it is Thanissaro Bhikkhu who is clear:

"When for you there will be only the seen...then there is no 'you' in terms of that. When there is no 'you' in terms of that, there is no 'you' there. When there is no 'you' there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of stress."

Note: the monk Bahiya was not killed by a young calf, but by a cow with a young calf. (Woodward mistranslated it.)

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2:1 Mucalinda is a naga; they have the form of cobras. However, this cobra (giant!) is protecting a human rather than harming. The Buddha says:

“Blissful is non-affliction in the world,  
Restraint towards living creatures;” (Ireland)

Or in Woodward:

“Happy is that benignity towards  
The world which one no creature worketh harm.”

The first precept here of non-harming is so beautifully expressed, even if that’s not the main point of the sutta.

2:2 There are many suttas which address the Right Speech issue. This one seems quite particular in its focus on not talking about the wealth of rulers. It’s clear enough that for monks at least, the only Right Speech is talk on Dhamma. Otherwise, maintain Noble Silence.

Note: on retreat this is pretty much the case—with the sole exception of community-service talk as necessary. (Asking a question during work periods, that sort of thing.)

Noble silence: sitting quietly at the DMV following a length retreat period, I was struck how very little of the talk I heard was even helpful. A lot of it was expressions of impatience or just attempts to fill the time, which could be done much more profitably by silence and a meditative, calm mind.

2:3 Another excellent non-harming sutta. Seems to be quoted fairly often. Hitting a snake with a stick—even though snakes are thought to be icky, scary and dangerous things. Our attitude towards non-harming must extend to *all* creatures, not only those which we happen to like.

I think the key line is: “beings desiring happiness” (Ireland) or in Woodward: “creatures fair for happiness.” All beings wish to be happy and to avoid suffering.

2:4 This sutta tells us that if we are freed from clinging to the aggregates (i.e., relative existence) then one is neither pleased by good things nor upset by unfortunate. It’s almost a sophisticated version of “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words may never hurt me” – adding that words need not please, either.

Obviously this must not be taken to an extreme. Words are, after all, a prime medium for the conveyance of the Dhamma—although they are by no means the only medium. The sutta is not advocating apathy. There remains contact—the ear (organ) hears (act) the sound of the word (object) and from this arises contact, then feeling of pleasant/unpleasant/neutral. Sense base -> contact -> feeling is neither suffering nor liberation; it’s just what happens. Only at the next link, “clinging” does one have problems.

So: in the heard there is only the heard...in the thought only the thought. (Udana 1:10).

2:5 Here we address the basic difficulty of living in a householder’s life while practicing dhamma. “...being involved with various affairs of business that had to be done...”

These bondings are not necessarily bad per se. However, in order to practice at the very deep level, it seems that we really have to deal with worldly commitments at some level or another.

A full-tilt dot-com kind of career isn’t going to be very compatible with practice. There needs to be some give-and-take with career and family issues.

Sangharakshita talks about this at some length—not only does Right Livelihood mean that which is non-harming, but it also implies some form of livelihood which allows us the time and energy to practice.

The degree to which one can direct one's life to Dhamma will repay. This does not mean monasticism: we can use our lives as practice, allowing the more formalized parts of our Dhamma practice blend and complement our working lives, and vice-versa.

2:6 This is similar to the previous sutta, but by way of a rather bizarre example.

I can imagine the wife being marginally OK with using oil that her husband has vomited up, but I'm not so sure about passing through the other end.

Weird little sutta.

2:7 Again a somewhat odd example along the same lines as 2:5 and 2:6. The "problem" here is that people came to see the Buddha during the time of the midday meal—visiting time would have been later—and they were still wet from the ritual bathing which was common after a funeral.

2:8 There's a lot in this sutta—some of it pretty strange.

1) Suppavasa has been pregnant for seven years and in labor seven days.

Sometimes this is a device to show the relative importance of the being to be born. (Ex: in the West, Richard III of England was said to be in gestation for two years, although he was mythically a monster of sorts. In reality probably not.)

2) Upon expressing her faith in Buddha, Sangha, and Nibbana, to the Buddha, she gives birth to a healthy son and is herself made healthy.

Woodward mentions a Jataka in which her long pregnancy was a kind of karmic punishment. However the Buddha seems able to absolve such karma, at least to some limited degree. In fact, there is a line:

"It is indeed wonderful, it is indeed marvelous, the great supernormal potency and power of the Tathagata!"

There is more of this in the later Mahayana suttas, but there's more than one might think in the Pali Canon—even in a collection which is considered to be pretty early.

3) There's an exchange between Mahamoggallana and one of his lay followers; he agrees to give food to the Sangha after Suppavisa has given hers. It doesn't seem to have much to do with this, but I catch a connection here at the line from Mahamoggallana:

"For two of these things, friend, I will be your surety, for wealth and life; but as for faith, you are your own surety."

This all revolves around faith—Suppavisa's and the lay follower's.

4) The child can not only talk, but he says he isn't well or healthy, having just spent seven years in the womb.

So both mother and son suffered over his long birth process—but both realize the joy of faith that it comes out well. The child is to become a great elder and the mother can wish for seven such sons.

For those who are heedful, neither suffering nor bliss really exist.

2:9 Another sutta on the 2:5 tradition—i.e., the problems of being bound to worldly work and responsibilities.

2:10 This stands as a kind of punch line to the set of suttas about not being bound to the world. Bhaddhiya was wealthy, but he found the true happiness in total renunciation. “Free from fear, blissful and sorrowless...”

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3:1 Pain as “the ripening of former action”—the Dhamma pain (or karma pain) encountered in meditation. The verse says that the one truly liberated “Has no need to address people.”

Thus you don’t have to ask for help or a solution. It’s just pain—a state like any other. In mindfulness ‘pain’ becomes something very different, really a bunch of somethings—all manner of experience. It’s just experience.

Western Buddhists in particular are apt to make far more of pain. We live in a pleasure-and-ease culture and thus there’s something *wrong* about pain. Yet pain is every bit as much part of living in a body as any other feeling.

Dhamma pain is a terrific teacher.

3:2 Here the Buddha uses a kind of modern psychology in drenching him with his own desires to cure a monk of lust. The monk wants one young woman; the Buddha gives him 500 and in the excess of the desire (and its subsequent embarrassment) the monk is moved to deep practice leading to his arahantship.

3:3 The first part of this sutta displays a kind of “tough love” towards a group of undisciplined monks. They are banished and in their shame and remorse they reach a level of liberation.

The second part once again shows us Ananda not quite “getting it” due to his lack of psychic powers.

3:4 Magnificent image of Sariputta sitting in his calm and beautiful majesty. “Just as a mountain made of solid rock/Stands firm and unshakeable...”

3:5 An equally fine image of Mahamoggallana sitting. “A bhikkhu who is always concentrated/Can know Nibbana for himself.”

3:6 A good treatment of what it means to be a “brahmin” in the Sangha. Pilindavaccha had been a birth brahmin for 500 lives, but in this life is but a monk. It is the one freed of the taints, “his mind quenched”, who is the brahmin.

3:7 An extended treatment of the idea that devas are just as enmired in samsara as the rest of us, and need merit just as we do. Here, even Sakka—lord of the devas—wants merit by giving alms to Kassapa.

3:8 Right Speech! Talk about Dhamma or maintain noble silence.

3:9 Like 3:8; you talk Dhamma or maintain silence.

3:10 The Buddha truly seeing the suffering of this world, much like the Fire Sermon.

This sutta is quite a fine min-exposition of the teachings. Especially important I think is the care with which the annihilationist thinking is avoided:

“The craving for being is abandoned,  
Yet one does not delight in non-being.  
Nibbana is total dispassion and cessation  
(Attained) with the complete destruction of cravings.”

Previous to this, the Buddha very specifically says that neither eternalism nor annihilationism have the means for liberation.

It’s the ending of *grasping* (clinging) that is the end of suffering.

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4:1 This sutta is found elsewhere—or at least the *setting* is found. Meghiya sits under the tree and is assailed by thoughts of lust, ill-will, and of doing harm. He is as yet not mature in his practice.

He is taught that there are five qualities which bring the practice to maturity:

- 1) Association with good friends—those on the path and serious in their practice. Note the many sutras in which the Buddha says that good companionship is the whole of the spiritual life, not even part of it.
- 2) The observance of sila. Undertaking the precepts, seeing danger in the slightest fault.
- 3) Hearing talk that is conducive to awareness and sobering—few wants, contentment, seclusion, non-entanglement, and so forth.
- 4) Persistence is aroused (i.e., energy) for abandoning unwholesome qualities and taking on skillful ones.
- 5) Discerning to observe arising and passing away.

Note that if 1) has been fulfilled, those admirable people will aid greatly—if not ensure—the remaining four.

The next four qualities are kinds of meditation practices that are specific to certain unwholesome states—or perhaps we can also see these for various personality types. (Bhante G talks about these in his pamphlet on the jhanas.)

<i>Meditation on Counteracts</i>	
<b>Foulness</b>	Lust
<b>Metta</b>	Ill-will
<b>Breathing</b>	Distraction & restlessness
<b>Inconstancy</b>	Conceit of self

4:2 When one is filled with lethargy and torpor, other very unwholesome qualities can easily follow—which are duly listed here.

4:3 The story itself is touching—a cowherd who hears Dhamma, serves the Sangha, but is then murdered. The verse is from the Dhammapada—no matter what an enemy may do to you, your mind hurts you even more.

4:4 This one is both funny and touching. The yakkha hits Sariputta hard enough to fell an elephant but Sariputta hardly feels it, while the yakkha is hurled down screaming to hell.

4:5 This one keeps up and expands the metaphor of the Buddha as great bull elephant.

4:6 Another list of attributes of the awakened mind:

Not insulting  
Not injuring  
Restraint in the precepts  
Moderation in eating  
Living secluded  
Intent on the higher mind

4:7 Slightly shorter version of 4:6, with Sariputta instead of Pindola Bharadvaja.

4:8 Elaborate story about other sect's wanderers attempting to discredit the Sangha by murdering an innocent woman, burying her, and spreading a rumor that she was raped and murdered by the Sangha.

The Buddha's advice to the Sangha is simple enough: the false accuser is punished in time as the karma of the deed ripens.

The final udana is another example of not being affected by harsh words.

4:9 The udana has a great line:

"Whose life causes no remorse  
And who sorrows not at death."

4:10 Like 4:6 and 4:7, the assurance of the arahant's having cut the cord of being.

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5:1 This sutta ties in well with some discussions we've had about the importance of compassion for the self as being integral to the cultivation of compassion for others.

"...one who loves himself should not harm another."

5:2 A good illustration of the differing meaning of "bodhisatta" within the Theravada context—here meaning "buddha-to-be."

5:3 Perhaps the most important message here is that even a leper can become enlightened—or at least well on the way.

Note that the Woodward translation has the same problem with "cow with young calf" as before, mistranslating it as "calf" only.

The karmic consequence of being cold to a leper is many hundred thousands of years in hell, then being born into this world as a leper. But he came upon the Dhamma, received the teachings fully—and in his rebirth was born as a deva in the Tavatimsa heaven.

"...a wise man in the world of the living  
Should avoid demeritorious deeds."

5:4 Two good teachings. First is that all beings dislike and fear pain—thus we should not inflict it.

The second is critical as well: "If you have done a bad deed or do one now,/You will not escape pain, though you try to flee."

5:5 This story of the unclean monk in the Sangha—and the Buddha's refusal to recite the Patimokkha as a result—has been encountered elsewhere.

There are eight qualities of the Dhamma and Discipline which are listed, each as a metaphor with the ocean:

- 1) The training is gradual, not sudden.
- 2) No training rule is ever broken by the practicing monk
- 3) The Sangha will eject an immoral, impure member
- 4) The four castes are absorbed in the Sangha, cease to exist
- 5) There is no end to the possibility of enlightenment
- 6) The ocean has one taste (salt); the Dhamma of liberation
- 7) The Dhamma contains precious things—the 37 constituents
- 8) The Dhamma is the abode of the stream-enterers through arahants.

5:6 Charming story describing how one particular bhikkhu became ordained. It shows that the going-forth and the higher ordination are available at any age.

5:7 Abandoning doubts—"as to here or beyond/In one's own or another's experience." Overcoming doubt is one of the purifications.

5:8 Beginning of Devadatta's schism. "For the noble to do what is bad is difficult" seems to imply that Devadatta is not, therefore, noble.

5:9 Youths who stand around speaking abusively. They think they are being so cool, when in reality they look only as foolish children. The udana addresses this beautifully.

5:10 "successive distinctions"—up through eight jhanas, into insight and release.

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6:1 This sutta—the Buddha at the Capala Shrine being tempted by Mara to relinquish life early—occurs both in S and D—in the Parinibbana Sutta in D. However, there is a different verse in S.

6:2 This appears in the Kosalasamyutta of S. However, the verse is different. An interesting line: “One should not make a business of Dhamma.”

How does this jibe with the current marketplace for Buddhist stuff? Are companies like DharmaCrafts owned and operated by practitioners?

Certainly it removes the possibility of the Christian evangelical big-business type. But there is Right Livelihood—obviously we need to support ourselves.

6:4 This is a classic story—the group of blind men and the elephant. The udana:

“People who see only one side of things  
Engage in quarrels and disputes.”

6:5 Adds well to 6:4:

“Not finding a firm foothold  
They sink in the middle of the stream.”

6:8 Extremes are what cause cemeteries to grow—the extremes here being asceticism and sensualism.

6:9 Excellent metaphor here of flying insects being drawn towards the candle and then burned in it.

“Like insects falling into the flame  
Some are intent only on what is seen and heard.”

6:10 Excellent metaphor of various teachings. The glow-worms seem bright enough in the dark, but then the sun rises. The Buddhas are the suns.

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7:1 Even a dwarf can be liberated.

7:2 More about Bhaddiya the dwarf.

7:3 Clear statement: if you’re tied up with sensual desires, you will not cross over

7:5 The bhikkhus didn’t like to hang around Bhaddiya the dwarf—but the Buddha pointed out to them that he (Bhaddiya) was of tremendous attainment.

7:9 Good metaphor here: the abusive can’t really harm you if you don’t accept their abuse.

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8:1 I suppose this is an ultimate statement on the nature of Nibbana to be found anywhere. What there is “no” of:

1. Elements: earth, water, fire, air
2. Jhanas: infinity of space, infinity of consciousness, nothingness, neither-perception-nor-non-perception
3. Physical world: this world, another world, both, sun, moon
4. Movement and conditions of being: coming, going, staying, deceasing, uprising
5. Not fixed, not moveable, has no support.

8:2 That Nibbana isn’t easy to understand is witnessed here by the udana:

*The uninclined is hard to see,  
The truth is not easy to see...*

8:3 This is I think the most famous statement about Nibbana that there is. It states clearly that there is a “not-born, a not-brought-into-being, a not-made, a not-conditioned.” If there weren’t, there would be no escape from the “born, brought-to-being, made, conditioned.” But there is the ‘not’ of this, and therefore escape is possible.

8:4 Here’s an interesting ‘chain’ like the Nidanas, although different:

Unsupported  
No instability  
Serenity  
No inclination  
No coming-and-going  
No deacease-and-uprising  
Neither “here” nor “beyond” nor “in between the two.” (This is the end of suffering.)

8:5 Also found in the *Parinibbana Sutta*, here we have the problem of *sukaramaddava*, the “pig’s delight” that was served to the Buddha as his last meal. Was it pork? Or was it truffles?

Woodward: translates it as ‘truffles’ but mentions that there is controversy about it. Thanissaro Bhikkhu didn’t translate this sutta at all.

8:6 This sutta is also largely found in the *Parinibbana Sutta*, with events that happen before those described in 8:5. However, there is a terrific lesson in the concluding udana:

*While people are binding a raft  
The wise are already across.*

This tells a lot about those who haven’t decided to do or are looking for solutions and discussing them, so forth—like those who can’t quite decide how they’re going to practice but keep looking around for a way to do it. The wise just get on with it, and do it.

8:7 It would seem that Nagasamala, the Buddha’s attendant in the early years, was a bit on the stubborn side, to put it mildly. He was so convinced that his direction was the right direction to walk on the road that he even put down the Buddha’s robe and bowl and went on in his own way—this seems awfully irresponsible to me.

8:8 If you have a lot of children, you’re going to go to a lot of funerals.

8:9 Rather spectacular vision of achieving final Nibbana, as Dabba goes into deep samadhi on the fire element, rises up in the air, and burns up!

8:10 Another version of the same image—really quite a spectacular conclusion to the Udana.

## **Scott Foglesong Sutta Nipata Commentary**

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[http://web.archive.org/web/20141019134312/http://www.scottfoglesong.com/buddhism/suttanipata\\_commentary/suttanipata\\_commentary.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20141019134312/http://www.scottfoglesong.com/buddhism/suttanipata_commentary/suttanipata_commentary.htm)

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From Sangharakshita: The Eternal Legacy

The antiquity of the collection is attested by:

Internal evidence

archaic vocabulary

grammatical irregularities

loose syntax

metaphorical references haven't hardened into precise terms yet

doctrinal formulae (including four noble truths) are absent

no sign of nuns

External evidence

The two concluding vaggas are cited by other Tipitaka works

The Niddesa, a commentary on the SN, has canonical status

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Uragavagga: Snake Section

This is thought to have been the work of a single highly gifted poet-author, who possibly sat at the Buddha's own feet.

### 1.1 The Snake's Skin

In this sutta, the Cycle of Existence is compared to an old, decayed snake's skin which is worn out and eventually discarded by the snake (i.e., practitioner.)

1 "as the snake poison diffused in the body is removed by antidotes"...so there were antidotes to snakebite back then, as now.

8-13 begins a series of statements with "He who is neither restless nor indolent". Most of these include "knows that all in the world is unsubstantial".

17 introduces the five hindrances—so they are pretty early in the teaching as a set of factors.

This sutta can be thought of overall as a kind of overall guide to the arising of the enlightened mind, in the slow steady process of purification. The various lines make clear that these states are achieved one by one, and each one slowly—like the way a snake sheds its old, worn-out skin.

Subdues his arisen anger

Cut off passion

Cut off craving

Demonished conceit without leaving a trace

Seeing in states of becoming no essence

With no inner anger, who has gone beyond becoming and not becoming

Discursive thoughts are dispersed

Hasn't slipped past or turned back: (Note: "not transgressed or caused another to transgress) is another possible rendering):

Transcending all complication

Knowing with regard to the world "all this is unreal"

Without greed

Without aversion

Without delusion

In whom there are no obsessions (or “latent tendencies”)  
 There’s nothing born of distress leading back to this shore  
 There’s nothing born of desire keeping him bound to becoming  
 Abandoned five hindrances.

The old, worn out skins of all of these: anger, passion, craving, conceit. The old skin is seeing an essence, conceiving of becoming and not-becoming; we shed this. Once the skin starts to be sloughed off, there is no going back and putting it back on again. So it is the knowledge that the world is ultimately without essence: we are without greed, aversion, and delusion. No obsessions, no distresses or desires, a full abandoning of the hindrances.

## 1.2 Dhaniya Sutta

In this sutta, the Buddha is in dialog with the herdsman Dhaniya. The two of them speak sentences back and forth which compare the earthly existence of Dhaniya to the enlightened existence of the Buddha.

Dhaniya	Buddha
House is thatched	Body is uncovered
Fire is kindled	Fires of passion are extinguished
Meadows and cattle are healthy	Well-constructed path; no more need of raft
Wife is not wanton and obedient to him	Mind is obedient and free of passion
Self-employed and supports himself	No one’s servant; no need to serve
Has young bulls and calves	Has no young bulls nor calves
Stakes and ropes are firmly tied	No fetters for him

When the rain comes, Mara tempts Dhaniya with the delights of cattle and children and such; but the Buddha points out that to have cattle is to have grief about them, to have children, and so forth. The elements of sensory existence bring about grief and suffering.

At the end of the sutta, Dhaniya comes to the Buddha: we come to you as a refuge, one with vision. They come to understand that it is the Buddha’s teachings which bring true happiness, and not just the material things in life. After this, Mara has tried to tempt them (as I mention above) but they are (apparently) able to surmount that. At the very least, the Buddha does seem to have the last word.

## 1.3 Khaggavisana Sutta : The Unicorn’s Horn

The simile of the unicorn’s horn—in some translations it’s the rhinoceros. However, the translator here has chosen ‘unicorn horn’ to emphasize the solitariness which is being recommended and described in the sutta.

Norman (in the PTS edition) uses the Rhinceros-horn. Thanissaro Bhikkhu speaks of this at some length. The actual text reads: “Wander alone like a ‘sword-horn’, which is the Pali term for rhinoceros. The commentary insists that this refers to the animal’s horn rather than the animal itself, given that the Indian rhino is one-horned. However, a rhinoceros-horn cannot wander alone. Perhaps the rhino was used a symbol of being alone, as well as the single horn. Thanissaro Bhikkhu has chosen to say “rhinoceros” since that is an animal that can at least wander.

39: “Practising loving-kindness, equanimity, compassion, deliverance, and sympathetic joy at the appropriate time...” this sounds amazingly as though there is a kind of proto-Brahma-vihara set here, consisting of five Divine Abodes (deliverance being the new one) as well as the traditional four.

There are a surprising number of versus which warn about the dangers of unsuitable companions. Generally speaking, if you have a suitable companion—one who can be a zealous comanion, an associate of good disposition, then it’s OK. Otherwise, stay alone. Better to wander alone than to be deflected by unsuitable companions.

The last verse is sobering, and somewhat shattering: *"People associate with an resort to others for some motive; nowadays friends without a motive are hard to find. Wise as to their own advantage, men are impure. One should wander solitary as a rhinoceros horn."* How nothing ever changes: these verses, written 2500-some-odd years ago, and just as valuable today. Are there friends without motives? Can we find them? Can they find us? As a seeker of ultimate truth, we may not be able to find such friends and, if that isn't possible, it is up to us to wander solitary and alone.

I found this to be very much the case in regards to the gay Buddhist groups. There were lots of good friends there, but in fact I found out of that congregation one primary friend with whom I could wander—that being Jim Wilson. But the group itself was not really suitable for me. And the GMBS, while very sweet, was becoming a downright hindrance with its emphasis on sociability and lack of practice. I found it necessary to wander alone in that respect, although upon finding my way into Spirit Rock I found the environment that I needed for steady and secure practice.

#### 1.4 Kasibharadvaja Sutta : The Farmer Kasibharadvaja

The brahman farmer reproaches the Buddha for not being a farmer or helping with ploughing and yet seeming to expect food. The Buddha replies that he is indeed a farmer: he plants confidence; self-control reins the beasts, wisdom is his yoke and plough, modesty his pole, mind his rope, mindfulness his ploughshare and goad. He harvests the fruit of immortality, which is certainly a good fruit: at the harvest, one becomes free from all suffering.

The Buddha's lesson encourages the farmer, who eventually takes the robe and achieves nibbana.

There don't seem to be any comments handy on the issue of the milk-rice which, thrown into water with no living creatures, bubbles and steams, like a sizzling rice soup. There is something here about the food which has been offered to the Tathagata cannot then be eaten by anyone else, and seems in fact to have become poisonous to anyone else. I'm still not quite sure what the meaning here is.

I need to check on this, but I believe that this is the same Bharadvaja who is the first of a large family to go for refuge; one by one they all go for refuge. It's either the SN or the AN—I think the SN.

#### 1.5 Cunda Sutta : Cunda the Smith

Cunda asks the Buddha about the four types of monks. The Buddha answers that there are:

##### 1. The Victor of the path (fully realized)

This is the fully-realized one, who lives entirely by the path, who has removed the arrow of craving completely.

##### 2. The teacher of the path

He knows what's important, analyzes and shows the Dhamma.

##### 3. One who lives by the path

Lives by the principles of the Dhamma, is well-trained and controlled

##### 4. one who corrupts the path

Creates counterfeit Dhamma; hides amongst monks although isn't a true monk himself; corrupter of families, deceitful.

#### 1.6 Parabhava Sutta : Downfall (Failure)

In this sutta, the Buddha outlines twelve different reasons for a practitioner's downfall. They are:

1. Aversion to the Dhamma
2. Fond of the wicked
3. Fond of sleep and laziness
4. Although well-to-do, lacking in support for parents
5. Deceitful to brahmins or ascetics
6. To have wealth but to be stingy with it

7. To be proud of one's birth or wealth or clan
8. To be a rake, drunkard, or gambler
9. Not to be contented with one's own wife, but to consort with floozies
10. Taking a young wife and being jealous (in Norman's translation, "a man past his youth brings home as girl with breasts like timbaru fruit.")
11. To place an irresponsible woman or man in charge
12. To be of noble birth and to crave for rulership

How well this compares with the Judaeo-Christian theory of downfall! In the JC version, downfall is almost automatic. Adam & Eve are placed in Eden and are given curiosity by their creator; they are then told that they mustn't eat from the tree of knowledge. And yet there is a snake who seems to be able to persuade them to do it. So they do it, and that's pretty much the downfall right there: nobody has much of a chance after that. However, in the Buddhist ideal, it's what you do on a regular basis that brings about downfall, but more importantly, you can change these things and begin back upwards again. There is no sense of being eternally damned for anything, nor is this an unreasonable set of terms. Each of these things is something that is pretty much guaranteed to make your life more miserable, whether they be something attached to Dhamma or not.

### 1.7 Vasala Sutta : Discourse on Outcasts

This is a simply wonderful sutta, which clearly states the Buddha's position on caste. It declares all of the things that make one an outcast—lying, stealing, disrespect, immorality of various sorts including disrespect to the Sangha. He says: *Not by birth is one an outcast; not by birth is one a brahman. By deed one becomes an outcast, by deed one becomes a brahman.*

This has always been a greatly attractive aspect of the Dhamma, among so many. Anyone, regardless of birth or status, is welcome in the Sangha. It is a Sangha of achievement, of deeds, of intentions, and not of birth or status or any other such thing. The Buddha did not appear to all the khattiyas—he was not interested in just his own tribe. (Compare this to Jesus of Nazareth, who spoke that he was primarily here for the lost sheep of Israel.) There is absolutely no cultural component to the Buddhadharmā; it is open to all. A meritocracy of the highest order—by our deeds we become members of the Sangha, not by birth, and also not by any outside agency. There is no need for baptism or confirmation or ceremony. I am a Buddhist and an upasika, through my own efforts. There is no piece of paper calling me a lay disciple of the Buddha. I am such due to my own efforts, my own intentions, and my own heart.

It's worth noting that the Metta Sutta immediately follows this sutta, and seems to pick up almost where this one left off. That is, the Metta Sutta begins with a list of things that the good practitioner should be—skillful, capable, upright, peaceful, calm, etc—and it is the lack of those many qualities (especially the lack of Metta itself) which make one an outcaste. Thus the sutta is deepened by its context.

### 1.8 Karaniya Metta Sutta : Discourse on Metta

I suppose I could spend the rest of my life chanting and contemplating this sutta...

The Thanissaro Bhikkhu translation is particularly interesting. The opening lines create an interesting possibility in comparison to the Sharon Salzberg translation:

This is to be done by one skilled in aims  
Who wants to break through to the path of peace:

Compare:

This is what should be done by one who is skilled in goodness  
And who knows the path of peace

In Sharon's version, we already *know* the path of peace—that is, at least we know where it is and how to follow it. We are skilled in aims (goodness) in both versions. There is a little more implication I think in Sharon's version that we are already there to some extent in our practice, whereas in Thanissaro Bhikkhu's version, we want to break through to the path. However, this is probably hair-splitting: in both instances, there is a clear indication here that the practice of Metta is most definitely a skillful means to be used in breaking through to the Path, to realization.

In Acharya Buddhakarrakhita, we have "having glimpsed the state of perfect peace" which would tend to indicate that we are at least a bit of the way there first.

I cannot keep from feeling that the Buddha has said that Metta will take us through to full enlightenment. As Sylvia has said, perhaps it all boils down to being a really, really good person. That's really the path when you get right down to it.

#### 1.9 Hemavata Sutta : Satagira and Hemavata

These two creatures are yakkhas. Even though the translation is "demon", they don't seem to be the really icky kinds of yakkhas, but perhaps more questioning than anything else.

The Buddha's answers to their questions are quite important. To begin with:

1. What is the attachment by which the world is troubled? The five sensual senses plus the mind; it is the salvation of the world when one escapes from attachment to the six senses.
2. Who crosses the flood? One who is always virtuous, wise, well concentrated, reflects within himself, and mindful, crosses the flood which is difficult to cross.
3. Who crosses the sea? Abstaining from lustful thoughts and having broken all fetters, being one in whom desire for existence is extinct, will not sink into the deep.

#### 1.10 Alavaka Sutta : Alavaka

This is another yakkha, which questions the Buddha.

1. What is the best wealth? Confidence (faith).
2. What is the good practice that brings happiness? Well-practiced Dhamma.
3. What is the sweetest of all tastes? Truth.
4. What manner of living is said to be the noblest kind? Living with wisdom.
5. How does one cross the flood of recurrent birth? By faith.
6. How does one cross the sea of existence? By vigilance.
7. How does one transcend unhappiness? By strenuous effort.
8. How does one get purified? By wisdom.
9. How does one acquire knowledge? By reposing confidence and listening to the Dhamma, being diligent and attentive.
10. How does one obtain wealth? One who does what is proper, one who is resolute, one who is industrious acquires wealth.
11. How does one obtain fame? By truth.
12. How does one gain friends? By giving.
13. How does one not repent passing from this world to the next? The confident householder in whom there are four virtues—truthfulness, goodness, energy and generosity—will not repent after his death.

#### 1:10 Vijaya Sutta : Victory over Delusion

A contemplation on the unattractive nature of the body. While on the surface this may seem like a rather unappealing thing to do, it is a fine counteraction to lustful thoughts and attachment to the body in general.

*In the world, the monk who is wise, listening to the Buddha's word, fully comprehends the body and sees it in its true perspective. He compares his body to a corpse and thinking that this body is the same as a corpse and a corpse the same as this body, he removes desire for his own body.*

1:12 Muni Sutta : The Sage

A praise of the life of self-control.

*Having considered the ground, having discarded the seed and not supplying moisture for the growth of that seed; having abandoned sophistry, that sage who has seen the end of birth cannot be categorically described.*

*The blue-necked peacock which flies through the air, never approaches the speed of the swan. Similarly, the householder can never resemble the monk who is endowed with the qualities of a sage who meditates, aloof, in the jungle.*

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## 2 The Cullavagga or "Minor Section"

Sangharakshita, *The Eternal Legacy*: The Culla-vagga or 'Minor Section' is no less rich and varied in content, though perhaps as a work of art less unified. It opens with the *Ratana-* or 'Jewel' sutta, probably the latest sutta in the whole anthology, a ward-rune, and much used in Theravada countries for protective purposes.

### 2:1 Ratana Sutta : Jewels

From Piyadassi translation:

The occasion for this discourse, in brief, according to the commentary, is as follows: The city of Vesali was afflicted by a famine, causing death, especially to the poor folk. Due to the presence of decaying corpses the evil spirits began to haunt the city; this was followed by a pestilence. Plagued by these three fears of famine, non-human beings and pestilence, the citizens sought the help of the Buddha who was then living at Rajagaha.

Followed by a large number of monks including the Venerable Ananda, his attendant disciple, the Buddha came to the city of Vesali. With the arrival of the Master, there were torrential rains which swept away the putrefying corpses. The atmosphere became purified, the city was clean.

Thereupon the Buddha delivered this Jewel Discourse (Ratana sutta[1]) to the Venerable Ananda, and gave him instructions as to how he should tour the city with the Licchavi citizens reciting the discourse as a mark of protection to the people of Vesali. The Venerable Ananda followed the instructions, and sprinkled the sanctified water from the Buddha's own alms bowl. As a consequence the evil spirits were exorcised, the pestilence subsided. Thereafter the Venerable Ananda returned with the citizens of Vesali to the Public hall where the Buddha and his disciples had assembled awaiting his arrival. There the Buddha recited the same Jewel Discourse to the gathering.

A series of treasures, or fine attributes, belonging to either Buddha, Dhamma, or Sangha. Some of these are deeply moving: *Those who comprehend clearly the noble truths well taught by him who is endowed with profound wisdom, however exceedingly heedless they may be, they do not take birth for the eighth time. This precious jewel is in the Sangha. By this truth may there be peace!*

Note: the last two lines: *This precious jewel is in the xxx. By this truth may there be peace* is a translation of:

Idampi [sanghe/buddhe/dhamme] ratanam panitam  
Etena saccena suvatthi hotu

This certainly seems to have been designed for chanting—the rhythm is very strong and repetitive.

### 2:2 Amagandha Sutta : Stench

This is the real meaning of impure, or uncaste, as against the ritual meanings that would have been used in a brahmanical society.

It's interesting to note that this particular conversation takes place between an ascetic and the Buddha Kassapa, instead of our Buddha Gotama. The universality of the message is here stressed; it isn't specific to just our Buddha, but to all Buddhas. The Dhamma is universal and endless; it cannot be specific to just one teacher, which would make it a specific *thing* that could begin and/or end.

Note also that this particular sutta does speak clearly that vegetarianism doesn't have anything to do with being pure or impure: *Taking life, beating, wounding, binding, stealing, lying, deceiving, worthless knowledge, adultery; this is stench. Not the eating of meat.*

What is said here is always worth remembering: if one is living a virtuous life, then it is all well and good if one is vegetarian; this simply adds to the accumulation of virtue. However, it is not in and of itself a virtuous act—but it may result from virtuous intentions. A person can be a vegetarian and yet harm others, steal, lie, act irresponsibly sexually, and use intoxicants.

Here's perhaps the most important part:

*Abstaining from fish and meat, nakedness, shaving of the head, matted hair, smearing with ashes, wearing rough deerskins, attending the sacrificial fire; none of the various penances in the world performed for unhealthy ends, neither incantations, oblations, sacrifices nor seasonable observances, purify a person who has not overcome his doubts.*

*He who lives with his senses guarded and conquered and is established in the Dhamma, delights in uprightness and gentleness; who has gone beyond attachments and has overcome all sorrows; that wise man does not cling to what is seen and heard.*

Ajahn Jagaro (from Amaravati) has this to say about vegetarianism in particular:

*So when we eat meat, that has its consequences. What are the consequences? We are directly supporting an industry that is based on rearing animals, quite often under terrible conditions, for the sole purpose of slaughter. The meat can then be available in neatly wrapped little packages so that we can buy it and eat it. Our intention when we cook and eat meat is not to kill animals - I don't think anyone has that intention - however the fact remains that by the acts of buying, cooking and eating, we indirectly support the killing of the animal. It's not killing, but it is supporting.*

*Now, with that understanding, certain individuals may decide not to support killing. They won't want to be part of it; they will want to remove themselves from it. If there is one reason why a Buddhist should decide to be a vegetarian, it should be based on this perspective. There is only one good, valid reason, and that is compassion - not wanting to contribute to the suffering any more than one has to.*

*Vegetarianism is a matter of individual choice and responsibility, not something that can be forced, but it is certainly praise-worthy and compatible with the Buddha's teaching. But does it stop there? Are you now pure? You've become vegetarian, but are you blameless? Are your hands clean?*

### 2.3 Hiri Sutta : Shame

A sutta on the meaning of true friendship.

With whom should one not associate?

*One who behaves shamelessly, and who is duplicitous or two-faced in regards to friendship. One who is a talker, not a doer. One who is constantly on the alert for defects, constantly carping and critical.*

With whom should one associate?

*One who is like a son on his father's breast, faithful and reliable.*

What brings happiness?

*Human responsibility, which yields good result.*

What is the sweetest condition?

*Having drunk the sweetness of solitude and tranquility, becoming free from fear and wrongdoing.*

### 2.4 Mahamangala Sutta : The Auspicious Performance

In this sutta, the Buddha describes those virtues which make up the “auspicious performance”. They are:

Associating with the wise, those worthy of honor, rather than with fools  
To live in the proper environment  
To have done meritorious deeds in the past  
To set oneself in the right course  
A good, all-round education including arts and liberal arts  
Highly-trained discipline  
Pleasant speech  
Supporting one’s family and relatives  
Helping one’s relatives and friends  
Blameless actions  
Generosity  
Ceasing and abstaining from evil  
Abstention from intoxicants  
Diligence in virtue  
Reverence, humility, contentment, gratitude  
Timely hearing of the Dhamma  
Forbearance, obedience, association with exemplars of the Dhamma  
Self-control  
Perception of the Noble Truths  
Realization of Nibbana  
Sorrowless, unstained mind  
Undisturbed by worldly vicissitudes  
Being everywhere unconquered, attaining happiness everywhere

## 2.5 Suciloma Sutta : Suciloma

Suciloma was another yakkha who asked the Buddha questions.

From where do passion and hatred spring? From egoism.  
From where do discontentment, attachment, and terror spring? These also spring from egoism.  
From where do evil speculations arise? Also from egoism.

All these spring from desire, which are in one’s self like branches of a tree. Sense desires are the problem.

Remember: Nothing whatsoever is to be clung to as I, myself, or mine.

## 2.6 Dhammacariya Sutta : The Good Life

If one leads the homeless life, one must be truly a monk and not a fake monk. Not injuring others, or speaking harshly, or ignorant. If such a monk is to be found in the assembly, he is to be cast out. (There is a sutta in the Majjhima Nikaya in which precisely such a thing happens—the Buddha determines that there is an impure monk in the assembly and insists on that monk’s being ejected before the Uposatha can take place.)

Particularly good line: *Like a cess-pool filled over a number of years, such an impure one is difficult to be purified.*

## 2.7 Brahmanadhammika Sutta : The Good Conduct of the Brahmin

One of the interesting aspects of this sutta is that it makes clear that the brahmins didn’t marry until they were older, and then they had sex only for the purposes of reproduction. Apparently they didn’t have sex during the periods of menstrual flow (icky!), and then “only at the right time” which would presumably mean only when the time was right for reproduction.

*In olden days there were only three diseases: desire, hunger and decay; but owing to the killing of animals, these sprang to ninety-eight.* There may be more truth in this in terms of real happenings: if they did begin to kill animals (and presumably eat them), then there would be more infectious disease transmitted, and thus more disease. I'm sure that the line is meant in terms of spiritual disease, but at the same time, there might be some societal issue right along with it.

## 2.8 Nava Sutta : The Boat

On choosing a good and learned teacher, and avoiding the teacher who is not himself realized enough to point the way. A man who is being swept away by a strong current in a deep river: how can he help others to cross it?

*...he who has attained knowledge and has a well-trained mind, who is learned and unmoved; clearly knows he can help others to understand, who are attentive to listen and ready to comprehend.*

Note that the student must be ready to learn and able to comprehend as well: it's a two-way street.

## 2.9 Kimsila Sutta : Right Conduct

The character and conduct of the one who will be well-established and who will attain the highest well-being.

Honor elders

Not envious

Knows the right time for seeing the teacher

Knows the right time to listen attentively to teachings

Is obedient with teachers, discards obstinacy

Remembers and practices the teaching, self-restraint and virtue

Delights and rejoices in the Dhamma

Does not speak in opposition to the Dhamma

Refrains from unprofitable conversation

Passes time with true and well-spoken words

Abandons laughter, gossip, complaining, ill-will, deception, hypocrisy, greediness, spite, bad temper, impurity and attachment

## 2.10 Utthana Sutta : Arousing

This is an urgent exhortation to exert more effort. Arise! Get up! Sit up! There is no advantage to sleeping when you are afflicted by desires and taints. This reminds me a lot of the stories of U Pandita telling people to begin with four hours' sleep per night and then going down from there. Overcome the craving, do not let the opportune moment pass.

## 2.11 Rahula Sutta : Rahula

The Buddha speaks to his son about living the life of the recluse. To discard the five pleasures of senses plus the mind, to renounce the home life. Have restraint according to the Patimokkha, meditate on the Signless. Forsake egoism; by ending such egoism you will live calmly and well.

## 2.12 Vangisa Sutta : Vangisa

This sutta concerns the teacher of Vangisa; the Buddha confirms that upon his death he had obtained the parinirvana. The sutta is mostly praises to the Buddha, rather than being so much about Vangisa's teacher.

## 2.13 Sammaparibbajaniya Sutta : The Correct Homeless Life

This is a series of qualities that characterize the proper monk—i.e., the one who has truly become a proper wanderer. It's an incredibly long list, but there are certain categories within the list. These qualities are:

Belief in the efficacy of omens—shooting stars, dreams, and signs—is destroyed  
Giving up the desire of sense pleasure, either earthly or heavenly  
Refrain from slanders  
Has given up anger, greed  
Is free from attraction/repulsion  
Has give up attachment to pleasant/unpleasant  
Does not grasp anything nor is dependent on anything  
Not seeing value in material belongings  
Removing desire for grasping objects  
One who is not opposed to anyone, either by word thought or deed  
Understanding the Teaching well  
Aspiring to a state of Nibbana  
Does not seek approbation  
Does not become upset when abused  
Overcomes doubt  
Removes the arrow of desire  
Would not hurt anyone in the world  
Realizes the Teaching as it really is  
There are no latent evil tendencies whatsoever; all roots of evil destroyed  
Has overcome desires and is free of them  
Depravities are destroyed  
Has abandoned egoism  
Has completely escaped from the path of passion  
Restrained, emancipated and steadfast  
Confident, learned, who sees the path leading to Nibbana  
Does not take sides with quarreling sects  
Has removed greed, anger, and ill-will  
Has conquered the defilements  
Torn asunder the veil of evil  
Well disciplined in the Teaching  
Has gone to the other shore (Nibbana)  
Is firm and skillful in the knowledge concerning the destruction of asavas  
Has transcended egoistic thought as of past and future  
Is of exceedingly clear wisdom  
Released from all sensual objects  
Has realized the Truth  
Has understood the Teaching  
Has seen clearly the destruction of the depravities  
Has eliminated all attachments

In fact, the long list of qualities come down to just a few categories

1. Letting go of attachments to sensory objects
2. Understands the Teaching fully
3. Eliminates defilements
4. Sees through egoism
5. Is characterized by the qualities of the Brahma-Viharas

It is a very tall order to realize such qualities, but that is indeed our practice. We just take it one step at a time, one day at a time, and keep working at it.

A lay disciple, Dhammika, comes to the Buddha and asks him about the proper way for both monks and lay disciples to live.

Monks:

Not wandering for alms at the wrong time

Put away desires for sense pleasures

Sit in solitude, reflecting and self-composed

Speak of only Dhamma with anyone else

Do not slander or speak ill of others

Do not become involved with controversial arguments

Makes use of food, lodging, bed, seat, water

Householder:

The five precepts

Then the higher three: no food at night, no perfumes or ornaments, no high beds

Should observe the uposathas

Provide the monks with proper offerings

Support parents

Pursue a blameless career