

## Pubba,koṭṭhaka Sutta

### The Discourse at the Eastern Gatehouse

[The nature of faith in Buddhism]  
(Sāmyutta Nikāya 48.44/5:220-222)  
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2004

#### 1 Faith

**1.1** The Pubba,koṭṭhaka Sutta records a short but remarkable dialogue between the Buddha and Sāriputta that reflects the nature of faith (*saddhā*). The Buddha asks Sāriputta if he has faith that the five spiritual faculties (*pañc'indriya*) when fully cultivated would lead to the realization of nirvana (which is normally the case). Sāriputta, however, answers in the negative, explaining that as he has realized the truth for himself, he does not need to rely on faith.

In Buddhist teaching, there are 2 kinds of faith (*saddhā*):

- (1) “rootless faith” (*amūlaka,saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith (M 2:170), and
- (2) “faith with a good cause” (*ākāravati,saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 1:320,8, 401,23), also called “wise faith” (*avecca-p,pasāda*) (S 12.41.11/2:69).

“Wise faith” is synonymous with the second (positive) meaning, “faith with a good cause.” *Amūlaka* faith is based on what is “not seen, not heard, not surmised [unsuspected].”<sup>1</sup> While the former, negative faith says, “Believe that you may understand,” the latter, positive faith says, “Understand that you may believe.” However, as we shall see below, there is another kind of positive faith, that is, “affective faith.”

**1.2 Ledi Sayadaw** speaks of 2 kinds of faith: “ordinary faith” (*pakati saddhā*) and “faith through cultivation” (*bhāvanā saddhā*) (*The Manuals of Buddhism*, 1965:339 f). “Ordinary faith” is mainly based on giving and pious acts (which can be either wholesome or unwholesome, depending on the intention). “Faith through cultivation” is founded on mindfulness practice and meditation, and is always wholesome.

**1.3 Rupert Gethin**, too, speaks of two kinds of faith: the cognitive and the affective:<sup>2</sup>

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 in 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)

**1.4** If we examine the three sets of definitions, some important connections can be found. **Ledi Sayadaw**'s notion of “ordinary faith” may include “rootless faith” and/or “cognitive faith.” A person who gives, may, for example, do so blindly thinking, “It is good to give,”<sup>3</sup> or this could be motivated by received teachings (inducing cognitive faith) that giving out of fear<sup>4</sup> or that such giving would bring joy in heaven.<sup>5</sup> However, when one gives, reflecting, “This is an adornment for the mind, a support for the mind,”<sup>6</sup> this conduces towards one's mental cultivation and liberation.

<sup>1</sup> *Adiṭṭham asutaṃ aparisaṅkitam*, V 2:243, 3:163 & Comy; cf M 1:369.

<sup>2</sup> See also ERE: Faith & Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:387.

<sup>3</sup> *Sāhu dānaṃ ti dānaṃ deti*, **Dāna Sutta 1**, A 8.31/ 4:236.

<sup>4</sup> *Bhayā dānaṃ deti* (A 8.33/4:236).

<sup>5</sup> *imāhaṃ dānaṃ datvā kāyassa bhedaṃ param, maraṇā sugatim saggam lokam upapajjissāmi ti dānaṃ deti*.

**Dāna Vatthu S** (A 8.33/4:236 f).

<sup>6</sup> *Cittālaṅkāra,citta,parikkhār'attham*. This well known line, on the importance of wholesome karma to help in one's meditation, is found in many suttas, eg **Dāna Maha-p,phala S** (A 7.49/4:62), **Dāna S 1** (A 8.31/4:236), **Dāna Vatthu S** (A 8.33/4:236). See (**Aṭṭha**) **Dāna S 1-2** (A 8.31-32/4:236) = SD 6.6.

1.5 The Commentaries to the **Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16.1.8/2:78), the **Bodhi Rāja,kumāra Sutta** (M 85.58/2:95) and the **Padhāniy’āṅga Sutta** (A 5.53/3:65) further mention four kinds of faith (*saddhā*):<sup>7</sup>

(1) **Faith through attainment** (*āgamanīya,saddhā*, DA 2:259; other Comys: *āgamana,saddhā*), that is, the faith of the “omniscient” Bodhisattva [one bound to become a fully self-awakened one] by mastering it since his firm resolve (to become Buddha) (*sabbaññū,bodhisattānaṃ saddhā abhinīhārato paṭṭhāya āgatattā*), [“The type of confidence acquired by bodhisattas. After receiving recognition and assurance of future Buddhahood, a bodhisatta has unwavering confidence in the Three Gems, which implies an abiding confidence in the merit of good deeds.” (Ledi Sayadaw 1998:109)];

(2) **Faith through realization [understanding]** (*adhigama,saddhā*), that is, the attainment of the noble saints through realization [understanding] (*ariya,sāvakaṇaṃ paṭivedhena adhigatattā*). [“The confidence nurtured by the Noble One who, having won the fruits of path knowledge, has realized nibbāna.” (Ledi Sayadaw id)];

(3) **Faith by conviction** (*okappana,saddhā*), that is, conviction by way of unshakability [unshakable faith] when it is said [when one hears the words], “Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha” (*Buddho dhammo saṅgho ti vutte acala,bhāvena okappanaṃ*). [“Confidence inspired by the noble attributes of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. It comes out of conviction and it endures for a lifetime, but after one’s death it vanishes from one’s consciousness.” (Ledi Sayadaw id)];

(4) **Faith of calm joy** [“confidence of trust” (Gethin)]<sup>8</sup> (*pasāda,saddhā*), that is, the arising of calm and joyful faith (*pasād’uppatti*). [“Confidence in the Three Gems because the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha are recognized as being worthy of reverence. It is based upon a superficial high regard for the Three Gems and not on a deep conviction, so it is not stable.” (Ledi Sayadaw id)] (DA 2:529; MA 3:325 f = AA 3:257)

These four kinds of faith are clearly an attempt at classifying all its possible manifestations in the awakened and unawakened.

1.6 Wholesome faith (*ākāravati,saddhā* or *avecca-p,pasāda*) either is rooted in “positive feeling” (affective faith) in someone or something, or is a result of one’s mindfulness (“meditation”) practice (faith through cultivation). **Affective faith**, that is, faith arising through positive feeling, is the confidence in something that brings one happiness, the ability to cope with problems and a wholesome attitude to life. While **cognitive faith** is a received or learned emotional response (such as resulting from a childhood religious conditioning, peer pressure or psychological propaganda), **affective faith** results from personal experience of something wholesome. For example, when one meditates, one can *feel* (experience) the focus, clarity and peace, and as such one is feels happily confident about oneself. In other words, such a faith is “verified personal experience rather than on the authority of a person or a tradition.”<sup>9</sup>

1.7 **John Dewey** (1859-1952), one of the American founders of the philosophical school of Pragmatism, made this remark in the closing paragraph of his Terry Lectures at Yale University, published in 1934 as *A Common Faith*.<sup>10</sup>

Men have never fully used the powers they possess to advance the good in life, because they have waited upon some power external to themselves and to nature to do the work they are responsible

<sup>7</sup> DA only lists the 4 types of faith, glossing each briefly; MA and AA gives fuller definitions, which is followed here. Ledi Sayadaw, in his *Uttamapurisa Dīpanī*, lists the 4 kinds of faith (“confidence”) and naming them as follows: *pasāda saddhā, okappana saddhā, āgama saddhā, adhigama saddhā* (1998:109).

<sup>8</sup> Gethin lists (3) “confidence of trust” (*pasāda,saddhā*), (4) “confidence of making ready” (*okappana,saddhā*) (2001:115 n51).

<sup>9</sup> John J Holder, “On the possibility of a naturalistic theory of religious experience: Dewey and Early Buddhism,” 2004:10.

<sup>10</sup> John Dewey, *A Common Faith*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1934.

for doing. Dependence upon an external power is the counterpart of surrender of the human endeavor. (Dewey, *A Common Faith*, 1934:46)

**1.8** Faith arises through the direct experience of living, that is, understanding, the nature of suffering. In this connection, **the Upanisā Sutta** (S 12.23) says that suffering is the proximate or immediate cause of faith (S 12.23/2:31).<sup>11</sup> Here one does not “own” the suffering, that is, does not think of it as “I,” “me” or “mine”—that “I” am suffering; or “Someone is causing *me* suffering”; or “This suffering is *mine*”—but that it is the nature of life to be painful and unsatisfactory. Seeing this lack, one is motivated to work towards betterment.

**1.9 Faith or confidence?** I have above [1.1] mentioned two kinds of faith: (1) rootless faith (*amūlaka, saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith (M 2:170), and (2) faith with a good cause (*ākāravati, saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 1:320,8, 401,23), also called wise faith (*avecca-p, pasāda*).<sup>12</sup> It has been suggested to me<sup>13</sup> that the former, *amūlaka saddhā*, could be translated as “**faith**” and the latter, *ākāravati saddhā*, should be translated as “**confidence**.”

The understanding is that “faith” is not as desirable as “confidence.” Often this argument is based on the notion that “faith” has a theistic bias. The *New Oxford English Dictionary* gives these two definitions of “faith”:

- (1) complete trust or confidence in someone or something: *this restores one's faith in politicians.*
- (2) strong belief in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof.

What traditional Buddhists generally find objectionable here is with regards the second meaning of faith, that is, that a teaching is true or acceptable based on dogma rather than on fact and good. However, this is only one connotation of faith, albeit a negative one. It might be said that the positive sense is more common and popular, and the advantage of the word is that it has to do with religiosity.

Both “faith” and “confidence” has a common sense of “belief.” *Faith*, however, can denote a placing of trust in the word of another, and has little to do with confidence based on personal experience—a universal tendency in all religions and in Buddhism. However, when we say that someone is a *confident* public speaker we mean that he is free from fear and self-doubt. To say that one is “confident” in the Buddha or have “confidence” in the Buddha clearly misses out much of what *saddhā* means. *Saddhā* in the Buddhist sense, means faith, trust, confidence in one’s self-liberation as reflected in one’s clear understanding of the virtues of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

As such, one “keeps the faith,” even in the face of difficulties, rather than “keep the confidence.” In a theistic context, “keeping the faith” connotes that even though present circumstances are trying, the future will be fine. In the Buddhist sense, “keeping the faith” means that from one’s having tasted the truth, one is unmoved by wrong views and pain. The usage of a word depends on its context: as long as the context is clear, its intended sense is brought out. Otherwise one might subscribe to some Platonic Form (like a “paramātman of words”) existing behind words, that they have a definite and fixed sense.<sup>14</sup>

**1.10 Common usage.** There is a strong tradition in early Buddhism of using words and terms already current, especially where they are heavy with false view. During the second Buddhist Forum of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, KR Norman delivered an interesting paper on “Theravāda Buddhism and Brahmanical Hinduism: Brahmanical terms in a Buddhist guise” (1991c)<sup>15</sup> where he discusses some important Buddhist terms taken over from Brahmanism. He opens his paper by saying:

It is obvious that a teacher must be able to communicate, if his teaching is to be [understood] by his audience. This creates difficulties if he wishes to teach something new, for which terms do not exist. He has the choice of coining new terms or using old terms in a new sense. Both categories

<sup>11</sup> **Upanisā S** (S 12.23/2:29-32) = SD 6.12 (2004).

<sup>12</sup> S 12.41.11/2:69.

<sup>13</sup> Bhikkhu Pesala by email, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2004.

<sup>14</sup> It is useful to remember that it is our speech that defines the dictionary, and that the dictionary is merely an attempt to record such usages and to encourage proper language.

<sup>15</sup> See also AK Warder 1956 & Joanna Jurewicz 1995, 2000.

must be clearly defined, or his listeners may not understand [sic] the first and may misunderstand the second in their old sense. (Norman 1991c:193)

“An investigation into the terminology used by the Buddha shows how he coped with this problem” (id), Norman continues.

What is certainly true is that Buddhism owes much, especially in terminology, to Brahmanical Hinduism and much of the Buddha’s preaching would have been unintelligible to those who had no knowledge of Brahmanical teaching. Although some of the technical terms of Buddhism are exclusive to that religion, eg *paṭisambhidā*, much Buddhist terminology is, in form, identical with that of Brahmanism. At the same time, it must be recognized that, although the Buddha took over some of the terminology of Brahmanical Buddhism, he gave it a new Buddhist sense. The change of meaning is almost always a result of the fact that the Brahmanical terms were used in a framework of ritualism, while the Buddha invested them with a moral and ethical sense. (Norman 1991c:193)

Norman discusses the Buddha’s usage of brahminical terms in three categories, and here only the words are listed.<sup>16</sup>

- (1) Terms and structures taken over by the Buddha  
Devas; myths and fables (eg *Brahmajāla Sutta*, D 1; *Aggañña Sutta*, D 27).<sup>17</sup>
- (2) Terms taken over by the Buddha but used with new senses  
*Aggi, āhāra, amata, aṇa & iṇa, Brahman, brahma, cariya, brahma, patha, brahma, vihāra, brāhmaṇa, deva, yāna, jhāna, kamma, khetta, jina, nhātaka, puñña, sīla, sottiya, suddhi, tevijja, uposatha, veda, yoga-k, khema.*
- (2) Terms referred to but rejected  
*Attā, brāhmaṇa* (brahmin by birth), *suddhi* (purity by birth or ritual).

Some of the Buddhist terms are held in common with other contemporary religions, such as Jainism, for example (given in Sanskrit): *jina, nirvāṇa, tathāgata, bhāvanā, dhuta, yoga, kevalī, āśrava, karma, gati, mokṣa, śramaṇa, pravrajyā, pravrajita. Tapas, ṛṣī, tā(d)ī, phāsu(ya)*; and some epithets of the Buddha and Mahāvira, for example, *sabbaññū*. “It is possible there,” concludes Norman, “that the use of Brahmanical terms in a non-Brahmanical sense was taken from the general fund of vocabulary of śramaṇical religions” (1991c:200).<sup>18</sup>

If a teacher takes over his rivals’ terms and repeat[s] them often enough in his own meaning, he gives the impression that he is using them in the correct sense, and the original owners are wrong in their usage. (Norman 1991c:199)

**1.10 The Araṇa, vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 137) is an important guide in communicative language, where the Buddha declares:

“You should not cling to a regional language; you should not reject common usage.” So it is said. In what connection is this said?

How, monks, is there clinging to a regional language and rejection of common usage?

Here, monks, in different regions, they call a “bowl” *pāti, patta, vittha, serāva, dhāropa, poṇa* or *pisīla*. So whatever they call it in such and such a region, they speak accordingly, firmly adhering (to the words) and insisting, “Only this is correct; anything else is wrong.”

<sup>16</sup> Refer to Norman’s paper, “Theravāda Buddhism and Brahmanical Hinduism: Brahmanical terms in a Buddhist guise,” 1991c, for details. See also Steven Collins, *Selfless Persons*, 1982:53-58 how the brahminical usages of *karma* and related concepts.

<sup>17</sup> See **Mythology** = SD 36.1.

<sup>18</sup> “If the compound *brāhmaṇa-śramaṇa* covers the whole range of Indian religion, then it is appropriate to use the word *śramaṇa* for all those members of religious sects who were not brahmins” (Norman 1991c:200 n45).

This is how, monks, there is clinging to a regional language and rejection of common usage. And how, monks, is there no clinging to a regional language and no rejection of common usage?<sup>19</sup>

Here, monks, in different regions, they call a “bowl” *pāti, patta, vittha, serāva, dhāropa, poṇa* or *pisīla*. So whatever they call it in such and such a region, without adhering (to the words), one speaks accordingly.

This is how, monks, there is no clinging to a regional language and no rejection of common usage.

So it is with reference to this that it is said, “You should not cling to a regional language; you should not reject common usage.” (M 137.12/3:234 f)

The main idea of this passage is communicative language. If you want to sell a spade, call it a spade, and not “a flat-bladed ground-digger,” or worse to call it a *spathē* simply because a rival company has been using “spade.” There is neither taboo nor licence in clear and communicative language. Religious language for the masses has to be clear and easily understood. One has here to use words to go beyond words.

## 2 Temperament and learning

The main point of the Pubba,koṭṭhaka Sutta is *not* that faith is always negative (although it can be negative, as in the case of baseless or blind faith). In fact, for those who lack wisdom or whose grounding in wisdom is weak, wholesome faith (*saddhā* as a spiritual faculty) is a very good way of working towards spiritual liberation. As this faith becomes more balanced with wisdom, it turns into wise faith (*avecca-p, pasāda*). All this shows that we are of different temperament: some are faith-inclined, others are wisdom-inclined.

The Peṭakopadesa and the Netti-p, pakaraṇa, two classics on Buddhist exegesis, classify persons according to their nature or **temperaments** (*carita*) and their **personal abilities**. In terms of temperament (*carita*) and abilities, the Netti-p, pakaraṇa and the Peṭakopadesa divide persons into two basic groups: persons of **desire-temperament** (*taṇhā, carita*) and persons of **view-temperament** (*diṭṭhi, carita*), or more simply, the lustful type and the intellectual type (Nett 109). This classification scheme assumes that persons at each level of the path may have varying spiritual needs, propensities and abilities.

**A person’s temperament** determines what kind of defilements he will have. For example, the view-temperament person will have ignorance as a defilement (Nett 109). Temperament also determines how people seek release unsuccessfully—for example, by asceticism in the case of the view-temperament person, and by the pursuit of sensual pleasures in the case of a person of desire-temperament (Peṭk 242).

Another important classification scheme, a more elaborate one, posits **three types**: lusting temperament (*rāga, carita*), hating temperament (*dosa, carita*) and deluded temperament (*moha, carita*) (Nett 190). The Niddesa and Visuddhi, magga, building on these threefold typology, present **six types** of persons:

- (1) Lustful temperament (*rāga, carita*).
- (2) Hating temperament (*dosa, carita*).
- (3) Deluded temperament (*moha, carita*).
- (4) Faithful temperament (*saddhā, carita*).
- (5) Intellectual temperament (*buddhi, carita*).
- (6) Speculative temperament (*vitakka, carita*). (Nm 359, 453; Nc 138; Vism 101)

In terms of **learning ability**, the Nettippakaraṇa employs a classification system dividing persons into four types, a system also found in the Aṅguttara and the Puggala, paññatti:

<sup>19</sup> The Vinaya relates an incident where two monks complained to the Buddha that other monks of various origins were distorting the Buddha’s Teaching in using their own dialect (*sakāya niruttiyā*) and proposed that the Teaching be transmitted in Vedic verse (*chandaso*). The Buddha refused and declared: ‘I allow you, monks, to learn the Buddha Word in your own dialect.’ (*anujānāmi bhikkhave sakāya niruttiyā Buddha, vacanaṃ pariyāpuṇitum*, V 2:139; Geiger, PLL 1968:6 f).

- (1) The intuitive learner or one who learns from a condensed or brief teaching (*ugghaṭitaññū*).
- (2) The intellectual or one who learns from a teaching that is elaborated (*vipañcitaññū*).
- (3) The guidable or one who learns through guidance (*neyya*).
- (4) The rote learner or one who merely masters the letter of the text [without knowing its meaning] (*pada, parama*). (A 2:135; Pug 41; Nett 7, 125)

Interestingly, the fourth—the rote learner (one who masters only the letter of the text)—is not mentioned in the Nettippakaraṇa list. This is probably because the Netti sees the necessity of mastering both the letter and the spirit of the text.

### 3 The five spiritual faculties & the bases of success

It is very interesting to see how the five spiritual faculties (*pañc'indriya*) work for these four types of persons in terms of spiritual training. Here we can see the two levels of faith (*saddhā*): as a spiritual faculty (*indriya*) and as a spiritual power (*bala*). “The faculty of faith” (*saddh'indriya*) is “ordinary faith” (*pakati saddhā*), and “the power of faith” (*saddhā, bala*) or “wise faith” (*avecca-p, pasāda*) is “faith through cultivation” (*bhāvanā saddhā*).<sup>20</sup> While a spiritual faculty (*indriya*) is a fledgling quality, not always present or only in a weak form, a spiritual power (*bala*) is one’s inherent quality, always present and potent.

(1) **The intuitive or quick learner** (*ugghaṭitaññū*), one who is able to understand the teaching even from a brief statement, has much wisdom (*paññā*) and concentration (*samādhi*), and insofar as he is not awakened, needs to balance this ability with faith (*saddhā*) (that is, affective faith). His thinking has to be tempered with healthy feeling. The quick learner, for example, might be impatient with slow learners: as such he has to cultivate lovingkindness and patience. Such a person, for example, might be drawn to the breath meditation, but he would need to balance his practice with the cultivation of lovingkindness.

An example of the intuitive learner is the elder **Sāriputta**, who on hearing just the first two lines of a quatrain from Assaji, attains the fruit of stream-winning (V 1:40; J 1:85).<sup>21</sup> The intuitive learner’s mind is very well developed, and in this connection, the elder **Sambhūta** is one who attained liberation through having cultivated his mind (*cittam dhuram katvā*).<sup>22</sup>

(2) **The intellectual** (*vipañcitaññū*) or “scholar” who is able to understand a teaching from some involved reading, too, needs to balance this ability with faith. However, as he is not as adept as the intuitive learner, the intellectual has to cultivate mindfulness, too. In fact, mindfulness is necessary to all types of learners, and acts as the “moderator” of the spiritual faculties—harmonizing faith and wisdom, and harmonizing concentration and effort. Like the quick learner, the intellectual might be impatient with slower learners: as such, he has to cultivate lovingkindness and patience. The intellectual would find it easy to do the breath meditation, but he would need to balance his practice with the cultivation of lovingkindness. The intellectual, who understands through elaborated teaching, has an investigative mind. An example of such a person who gains liberation through mental investigation is the elder **Mogha, rāja** (*vīmaṃsam dhuram katvā*).<sup>23</sup>

When these two kinds of individuals—the quick learner and the intellectual—are spiritually developed and liberated they are called Dharma-followers (*dhammānussarī*):

<sup>20</sup> “Ordinary faith” and “faith through cultivation” are Ledi Sayadaw’s terms: see *The Manuals of Buddhism*, Rangoon: Union Buddha Sāsana Council, 1965:340 f.

<sup>21</sup> According to the Pali tradition, the verse and story run as follows:

Of all things that arise from a cause,	<i>Ye dhammā hetu-p, pabhavā</i>
Their cause the Tathāgata has told.	<i>tesam hetum tathāgato āha</i>

As soon as Upatissa (Sāriputta) heard these first two lines, he was established in the fruit of stream-winning. Then Assaji completed the stanza:

And also how these cease to be—	<i>tesañ ca yo nirodho</i>
This too the great sage has told.	<i>evam vādī mahā, samaṇo</i> (V 1:40; J 1:85)

<sup>22</sup> Tha 291-294; Ap 1:204 f; DA 2:642; SA 3:256; VbhA 306; cf DhsA 69.

<sup>23</sup> Sn 1116-1119; DA 2:642; SA 3:256; VbhA 306; cf DhsA 69.

**The Dharma-follower.**<sup>24</sup> Here, Mahānāma, some person does not possess wise confidence in *the Three Jewels*. He is not one of joyous wisdom,<sup>25</sup> nor of quick wisdom,<sup>26</sup> and he has not attained liberation. However, he has these five things [the five spiritual faculties]—the faculty of faith, the faculty of effort, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom. And he accepts the teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata only after some pondering over it with wisdom.<sup>27</sup>

This person, too, Mahānāma, is freed from hell, the animal kingdom, the ghost realm and the suffering states. (Sarakāṇi S, S 55.24/5:377)

(3) **The one who needs guidance** (*neyya*) tends to rely on faith (*saddhā*), which the wise teacher can use to lead him to wisdom. It is often easier for such a person to cultivate lovingkindness, which means that he would benefit from the balanced practice with breath meditation. Breath meditation would help to focus and clarify his mind so that he is able to understand the teaching better. The guided learner has to put forth effort (*virīya*) to cultivate wisdom, since he is likely to be dependent on others for his understanding or seek their approval, rather than think for himself.

The one who needs guidance tends to rely on faith, such as the elder **Raṭṭha,pāla**, who is declared to be foremost of the monks who renounced through faith (*saddhā,pabbajitānaṃ*, A 1:24). If such a person has a strong resolution or will to act (*chanda*) in spiritual development, he would in due course attain liberation, such as the elder Raṭṭha,pāla, who is said to have cultivated the will to act (*chandam dhuram katvā*) to find liberation.<sup>28</sup> **The Kaṇṇaka-t,thala Sutta** (M 90/2:125-133)<sup>29</sup> is cited as an example of a discourse given to those who need guidance (MA 3:361).

(4) **The rote learner** (*pada,parama*), that is, one who only whose the word at best, is totally dependent on the guidance of others, and as such is likely to be a faith-inclined person. As such, he may easily fall into cognitive faith (often a characteristic of the academically inclined), and who tend to regard those who appear to know better than he or who is charismatic is right, and as such it is proper to believe such a person. The rote learner has to be inspired to put forth much effort to build his mindfulness, and is often emotionally dependent on an authority figure. He should practise both breath meditation or lovingkindness cultivation in a balanced and harmonious manner to build wise faith.

The most famous example of the rote learner is the elder **Cūla,panthaka**, who when newly ordained cannot remember even a single stanza in the course of four months. When he contemplates giving up the holy life, the Buddha teaches him a special meditation as a result of which he becomes a full-fledged arhat.<sup>30</sup> The elder **Soṇa Koḷivisa** after being given a meditation subject by the Buddha, goes into retreat

<sup>24</sup> “Dharma-follower,” *dhammānussarī*. Although not mentioning it, this section describes the Dharma-follower, while the next section describes the faith-follower (*saddhā'nussarī*). See **Sarakāṇi S** (55.24/5:377); they are defined in **Kiṭṭhagiri S** (M 70.20-21/1:479). According to **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225), these two types of persons have reached the plane of the noble ones but have not yet realized the fruit of stream-winning, but will do so before they die. See S:B 1098 nn268-269

<sup>25</sup> “Of joyous wisdom,” *hāsa,pañña*, alt tr “of laughing wisdom” (from *hasa*, “laughter, mirth, joy”). “Here one with much joy [laughter], mirth, contentment and gladness perfects the virtues: this is joyous wisdom” (Pm 21.17/2:199 f). Comys mention *hasa,pañña* (joyous wisdom), *javana,pañña* (quick wisdom) [see foll n], *tikkha,pañña* (sharp wisdom, which cuts off all defilements) and *nibbedhika,pañña* (penetrating wisdom, by which one maintains dispassion toward all formations) (DA 3:391-393, 4:84-86; MA 4:84; SA 1:120-123, 2:85 f; AA 2:85; ThaA 3:106 f; NmA 1:231 f; cf PmA 3:640 on *hasa,pañña*).

<sup>26</sup> “Of quick wisdom,” *javana,pañña*. This refers to one who quickly understands that the five aggregates are all impermanent, suffering and not self (Pm 21.18/2:200). See prev n.

<sup>27</sup> *C'assa dhammā paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti*. I render *mattaso* here as “only...some”. See S:B 1099 n269.

<sup>28</sup> M 82; DA 2:642; SA 3:256; DhA 4:95; VbhA 306; cf DhA 69.

<sup>29</sup> See **Kaṇṇaka-t,thala S** (M 90) = SD 10.8 Intro (5) (2005).

<sup>30</sup> Tha 557-566; AA 1:215-220; DhA 1:239-255, 4:180; J 1:114-123; ThaA 2:236-242; ApA 317-321; Vism 388 f.

but his progress is severely impaired because he has too many visitors. He struggles in his meditation, especially the walking meditation until his feet bleeds. The Buddha then admonishes him on the middle way. The elder Soṇa is an example of one who exerts great effort (*viriyam dhuraṃ katvā*)<sup>31</sup> and is declared as the foremost of those monks who put forth effort (*aggam āradha, viriyānam*, A 1:24).

When these two kinds of individuals—the one who needs guidance and the rote learner—are spiritually developed and liberated they are called faith-followers (*saddhānussarī*):

**The faith-follower.**<sup>32</sup> Here, Mahānāma, some person does not possess wise confidence in the Buddha, in the Dharma and in the Sangha. He is not one of joyous wisdom, nor of quick wisdom, and he has not attained liberation. However, he has the five spiritual faculties. And he holds mere faith in the Tathāgata, mere love for him.<sup>33</sup>

This person, too, Mahānāma, is freed from hell, the animal kingdom, the ghost realm and the suffering states.

Even these great sal trees<sup>34</sup>, Mahānāma, if they could understand what is well spoken and what is ill spoken, I would declare them to be stream-winners, no longer bound to the lower world, of fixed destiny, sure of awakening!  
(**Sarakāṇi S**, S 55.24/5:377)

#### 4 Sāriputta's awakening

In the Dhammapada Commentary, the Buddha declares this of Sāriputta:

Indeed, Sāriputta goes not by the faith of others, for the reason that he has by himself attained the truth of the path and fruit by way of insight based on dhyana (*jhāna, vipassanā, magga, phala, - dhammesu*).  
(Dh 97; DhA 7.8/2:187)

Clearly, this is a description of Sariputta's being "liberated both ways" (*ubhato, bhāga, vimutta*). Both Sāriputta and Moggallāna are arhats "liberated both ways." All arhats are perfectly liberated in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into two types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration. Those who can attain **the eight liberations** [deliverances] (*aṭṭha, vimokkha*) (that include the four formless attainments and the attainment of cessation)<sup>35</sup> are called "liberated both ways," that is,

<sup>31</sup> V 1:179-185; A 3:374-379; Tha 632-644; DA 2:642; SA 3:256; VbhA 306; cf DhsA 69.

<sup>32</sup> "Faith-follower," *saddhā'nussarī*. See n1 on Dharma-follower.

<sup>33</sup> "Mere faith...mere love," *saddhā, mataṃ hoti pema, mattaṃ*. The "mere" here emphasizes the quality it qualifies. A similar statement is found in **Alagaddūpamā S** (M 22.4/ 1:141) & **Bhaddāli S** (M 1:444/ 65.27): "Those who have mere faith in me and mere love for me," (*yesaṃ mayi saddhā, mattaṃ pema, mattaṃ*). Comy explains that this refers to the insight practitioners (*vipassaka puggalā*) who have not attained any supramundane state, not gaining even stream-entry, they are reborn in a heaven. On the other hand, we can take this passage as is, that is, anyone who has "mere faith, mere love" in the Buddha are reborn in a heaven, without going against the grain of early Buddhism. See M:ÑB 2001:1212 n274.

<sup>34</sup> Comy says that the Buddha was pointing to 4 sal trees nearby (*Shorea robusta*) (AA 3:288).

<sup>35</sup> "**The eight liberations**" (*aṭṭha, vimokkhā/aṣṭa, vimokṣā*, D 2:70 f, 111 f, 3:262, 288; A 4:306, 349). The first two liberations are *kaṣiṇa* meditations, explained in some detail in **Mahā Sakuludāyi S** (M 77.23/2:13), but a more detailed exposition is found in **Paṭisambhidā, magga** (Pm 2:38-40). Liberations 1-3 have to do with the bases for mastery [3.24-32]; liberations 4-7 are the dhyanas (*jhāna*); and the last is the cessation of perception and feeling (*nirodha, samāpatti*). The eight liberations are as follows:

(1) **The 1<sup>st</sup> liberation** is that of one with physical form sees physical forms (*rūpī rūpāni passati*). Perceiving form in one's own body, one sees forms externally. This is said in connection with *kaṣiṇa* meditation and is one of the "bases for mastery" (*abhibhāyatana*), ie, powers gained through *kaṣiṇa/kṛtsna* meditation as means of transcending the sense-sphere; see D 2:110; M 77/2:13; A 8.675/4:305, 10.29/6:61. MA explains that the meditator does the preliminary exercise (*parikamma*) on an internal form (in one's own body), for example, the blue of the eyes for a blue *kaṣiṇa*, the skin for a yellow *kaṣiṇa*, the blood for a red *kaṣiṇa*, the teeth for a white *kaṣiṇa*, but the concentration sign (*nimitta*) arises externally (MA 3:258 f). The "transcending" (*abhibhāyatana*) of the forms is the attainment of absorption together with the arising of the sign. On emerging from the absorption, he considers, "I know, I see."

liberated from the physical body by means of the formless dhyanas, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood.

Those who have destroyed the defilements but lack the mastery over the eight deliverances are called “liberated by wisdom” (*paññā, vimutta*). The differences between the two types of liberation are given in **the Mahā, nidāna Sutta** (D 2:70 f) and **the Kīṭāgiri Sutta** (M 1:477 f). Within the same week of striving, Moggallāna not only masters the successive planes of meditative concentration but also wins the “paths of spiritual power” (*iddhi, pāda*), and thus had attained higher knowledge (*abhiññā*).

There is a whole chapter (*vagga*) in the Aṅguttara Nikāya dealing with **modes of spiritual progress** (*paṭipadā*) (A 4.161-170), of which four are mentioned:

- (1) painful progress with slow insight (*dukkhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā*).
- (2) painful progress with quick insight (*dukkhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*).
- (3) pleasant progress with slow insight (*sukkhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā*).
- (4) pleasant progress with quick insight (*sukhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*). (A 2:149-152, 154 f)

Of the suttas in the chapter, two are called **Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta** (A 4.167-168). In the Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 1, Sāriputta visits Moggallāna and on being asked by Sāriputta, Moggallāna tells him that his (Moggallāna’s) mode of spiritual progress was painful but with quick progress. In the Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 2, Moggallāna visits Sāriputta who says that his own mode of spiritual progress was pleasant with quick insight.

Moggallāna attained arhathood by swift realization (*khippābhiññā*), that is, in one week, but his progress was difficult (*dukkha, paṭipadā*) and needed the Buddha’s help, hence the swiftness in his insight (*khippābhiññā*). Sāriputta, on the other hand, took only slightly longer in his progress (two weeks), but his progress was smooth (*sukha, paṭipadā*) and he swiftly gained insight while listening to the Buddha

(2) **The 2<sup>nd</sup> liberation** is that of one who does not see physical form internally, but sees physical forms externally (*ajjhataṃ arūpa, saññī bahiddhā rūpāni passati*). Here the *kaṣiṇa* preliminary exercise is done on an external form (a *kaṣiṇa* object) and the arising of the concentration sign externally. The formulation of the second *vimokkha* “suggests that it is a shorthand for all the eight *abhibhāyatana*s which consist of variations on the theme *ajjhataṃ arūpa-saññī eko bahiddhā rūpāni passati*” (Gethin 2002:267 n7).

(3) **The 3<sup>rd</sup> liberation** is that of one liberated after contemplating the idea of the beautiful (*‘subhan’ t’eva adhimutto hoti*). This is said in reference to the attainment of form absorption (*rūpa jhāna*) by means of concentrating the mind on perfectly pure and bright colours as the *kaṣiṇa*-object. **Paṭisambhidā, magga** says that this mental state is also produced through the cultivation of the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*), as a result of which all beings appear perfectly pure and glorious, and thus the mind turns to the beautiful (Pm 5.20/2:39).

These first three are said in connection with *kaṣiṇa* meditation by way of the “spheres of sovereignty” or “bases for transcendence” (*abhibhāyatana*), that is, one of the 8 stages of mastery over the senses through absorption (*jhāna*). See **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16.3.24/2:110), **Mahā Sakuludāyi S** (M 77.22/2:13); **Abhibhāyatana S** (A 8.65/ 4:305), **Kosala S** (A 10.29/5:61). **Dhamma, saṅgaṇī** apparently regards the *abhibhāyatana* as being “concerned with the mastery and facility in certain aspects of *jhāna* practice” (Gethin, 2001:267). See Dhs 45-52 where the 8 *abhibhāyatana* (with slight variations from the Nikāya formulation) are treated as an aspect of *jhāna* that is of the form realm (*rūpāvacara*); cf DhsA 187-190.

The following four (4-7) are the formless attainments (*arūpa samāpatti*):

- (4) The sphere of the infinity of space.
- (5) The sphere of the infinity of consciousness.
- (6) The sphere of nothingness.
- (7) The sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

(8) The cessation of perception and feeling. This last stage requires both concentration and insight, and can be attained only by non-returners and arhats who have mastered the formless attainments. See Bodhi, *The Great Discourse on Causation* [Mahā, nidāna Sutta tr & exegeses], Kandy: BPS, 1984:47-51.

Comy on **Mahā Sakuludāyi S** (M 77.22/2:13) says that these liberations (*vimokkhā*) are the mind’s full (but temporary) release from the opposing states and its full (but temporary) release by delighting in the object (MA 3:255, cf 255-259). See discussion in **Maha Nidāna S** (D 15.35/2:70 f) = SD 5.17 Intro (10).

exhorting Dīgha, nakha. While Moggallāna had the Buddha's personal guidance in his progress, he had a smaller range in insight, whereas Sāriputta was not only independent in his progress but had a wider range of insight. Hence, Sāriputta's superiority and supremacy in wisdom.

## 5 Citta the householder

The Pubba,koṭṭhaka Sutta should be studied with the **Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta Sutta** (S 41.8), where the householder Citta makes a declaration similar to that of Sāriputta's statement on faith and wisdom. Citta, in answer to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta's question, employs a pun [highlighted in the quote]:

“Householder, do you have faith in the ascetic Gotama when he says, ‘There is a concentration without applied thought and sustained thought, there is a cessation of applied thought and sustained thought?’”

“Here, venerable sir, **I do not go by faith** in the Blessed One...” (*Na khvāhaṃ ettha bhante bhagavato saddhāya gacchāmi...*). (S 41.8.5/4:298) = SD 40.7

Here, we can either see the astute Citta is laying a verbal trap which he later springs, or that the Nigaṇṭha simply misunderstands Citta's answer. While he appears to be disclaiming allegiance to the Buddha, he is actually asserting that he has realized the truth of the Buddha's statement by personal experience and thus need not rely on mere faith in the Buddha's word.

Citta then asks Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, which is superior: knowledge (*ñāṇa*) or faith (*saddhā*). And the Nigaṇṭha replies that it is knowledge. Based on this statement of the Nigaṇṭha, Citta then declares his own knowledge in this famous statement (which he also declares to Acela Kassapa):<sup>36</sup>

“...to whatever extent I wish, venerable sir, quite detached from sensual pleasures, detached from unwholesome mental states, I enter and dwell in the **first dhyana**, accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought, accompanied by zest and happiness, born of seclusion.<sup>37</sup>

Then, to whatever extent I wish, venerable sir, with the stilling of applied thought and sustained thought, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, I enter and dwell in the **second dhyana**, free from applied thought and sustained thought, accompanied by zest and happiness born of concentration.<sup>38</sup>

Then, to whatever extent I wish, venerable sir, with the fading away of zest, I remain equanimous, mindful and fully aware, and experience happiness with the body. I enter and dwell in the **third dhyana**, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness.’<sup>39</sup>

Then, to whatever extent I wish, venerable sir, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain—and with the earlier disappearance of happiness and grief—I enter and dwell in the **fourth dhyana**, that is neither painful nor pleasant, and with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> **Acela (Kassapa) S** (S 41.9.8/4:301), the famous dhyana passage is stock: D 22.21/2:314 f, M 141.31/3:252; also D 2.75-81/1:73-75, M 27.19-22/1:181 f.

<sup>37</sup> *Vivicc’eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi sa, vitakkaṃ sa, vicāraṃ viveka, jaṃ pīti, sukhaṃ paṭhama-j, jhānaṃ.*

<sup>38</sup> *Vitakka, vicāraṇaṃ vūpasamā ajjhataṃ sampasadānaṃ cetaso ekodī, bhāvaṃ avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ samādhi- jaṃ pīti, sukhaṃ dutiya-j, jhānaṃ.* The 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyana is known as “the noble silence” (*ariya, tuṅhī, bhāva*) because within it applied thought and sustained thought (thinking and discursion, *vitakka, vicāra*) cease, and with their cessation, speech cannot occur (S 2:273); cf S 4:293 where *vitakka* and *vicāra* are called verbal formation (*vacī, saṅkhāra*), the mental factor responsible for speech. In **Ariya, pariyesanā S** (M 1:161), the Buddha exhorts the monks when assembled to “either speak on the Dharma or observe the noble silence” (i.e. either talk Dharma or meditate).

<sup>39</sup> *Pītiyā ca virāgā ca upekkhako ca viharati sato ca sampajāno, sukhañ ca kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti yan taṃ ariyā ācikkhanti, “upekkhako satimā sukha, vihārī ti tatiya-j, jhānaṃ.*

<sup>40</sup> *Sukhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā pubbe’va somanassa, domanassānaṃ atthaṅgamā adukkham asukhaṃ upekkhā, sati, parisuddhiṃ catuttha-j, jhānaṃ.*

Since I know and see thus, venerable sir, in what other ascetic or brahmin shall I place faith<sup>41</sup>  
as regard that there is a concentration without applied thought and sustained thought, that there is  
a cessation of applied thought and sustained thought?” (S 41.8.8/4:298 f)<sup>42</sup>

By way of paraphrase: the Nigaṇṭha thinks that Citta does not take the Buddha’s word for it, that is, he does not have faith in the Buddha. Citta, however, answers obliquely meaning that it is not because of faith in the Buddha, but because he knows it from his own experience, meaning that he does not need to take the Buddha’s word for it simply, because he knows for himself.

### 6 Dh 97 stanza

Apparently, this stanza (Dh 97) once closed the Pubba,koṭṭhaka Sutta (S 48.44/5:220-222). We know this because the Mahā Niddeśa (Nm 235-237), explaining *na saddho na virajjati* (Sn 853),<sup>43</sup> quotes the Pubba,koṭṭhaka Sutta that concludes with the Dh 97 stanza. It is possible however that the Nm 237 quote is just that, a quote, and not a part of the Pubba,ko.t.thaka Sutta. However, a comparison with the Sāmyukt’āgama (Chinese translation) would help.

This verse is connected to Sariputta’s liberation [4 above] which is not based on faith (not *amūlikā saddhā*, anyway), that is, not *saddhati*, taking someone’s word for it, but through his self-realization, ie wisdom.

Dh 97 has been commented on by the commentator (*bhāṣyakāra*) of **the Abhidharma,samuccaya**.<sup>44</sup> Norman has done a well known study on “Dh 97: A misunderstood paradox” (1979d).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *So khvāham bhante evaṃ jānanto evaṃ passanto kassaññassa samaṇassa vā brāhmaṇassa vā saddhāya gamissāmi.*

<sup>42</sup> See **The Layman and Dhyana** = SD 8.5(8).

<sup>43</sup> See **Purābheda S**, Sn 853; cf Sn 813.

<sup>44</sup> See **Dh 97** = SD 10.6.

<sup>45</sup> See **Dhammapada 97** = SD 10.7, esp Intro (2).

## The Discourse at the Eastern Gatehouse

(S 48.44/5:220-222)

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was dwelling in the Eastern Gatehouse<sup>46</sup> near Sāvathī.

2 There the Blessed One addressed the venerable Sāriputta thus:

3 “Sāriputta, do you have faith that the faculty of faith, when cultivated and often developed, has the Deathless as its ground, the Deathless as its destination, the Deathless as its final goal?

...that the faculty of effort, when cultivated and often developed, has the Deathless as its ground, the Deathless as its destination, the Deathless as its final goal?

...that the faculty of mindfulness, when cultivated and often developed, has the Deathless as its ground, the Deathless as its destination, the Deathless as its final goal?

...that the faculty of concentration, when cultivated and often developed, has the Deathless as its ground, the Deathless as its destination, the Deathless as its final goal?

...that the faculty of wisdom, when cultivated and often developed, has the Deathless as its ground, the Deathless as its destination, the Deathless as its final goal?” [221]

4 “Venerable sir, **I do not go by faith in the Blessed One about this:**<sup>47</sup>

that the faculty of faith,...

that the faculty of effort,...

that the faculty of mindfulness,...

that the faculty of concentration,...

that the faculty of wisdom, when cultivated and often developed, has the Deathless as its ground, the Deathless as its destination, the Deathless as its final goal.

Venerable sir, **for whomever this<sup>48</sup> is not known, not seen, not understood, not realized, not touched by wisdom—they would have to go by faith in others about this:**<sup>49</sup>

that the faculty of faith,...

that the faculty of effort,...

that the faculty of mindfulness,...

that the faculty of concentration,...

that the faculty of wisdom, when cultivated and often developed, has the Deathless as its ground, the Deathless as its destination, the Deathless as its final goal.

But, venerable sir, **for whomever this is known, seen, understood, realized, touched by wisdom—they would have no uncertainty, no doubt, about this:**

that the faculty of faith,...

that the faculty of effort,...

that the faculty of mindfulness,...

that the faculty of concentration,...

that the faculty of wisdom, when cultivated and often developed, has the Deathless as its ground, the Deathless as its destination, the Deathless as its final goal.

**I am one, venerable sir, for whom this is known, seen, understood, realized, touched by wisdom—I have no uncertainty,<sup>50</sup> no doubt,<sup>51</sup> about this:** that *the five spiritual faculties*, when cultivated and

<sup>46</sup> “The Eastern Gatehouse,” *pubba,koṭṭhaka* (S 5:220), in Sāvathī, was located near the brahmin Rammaka’s hermitage (*Ariya,pariyesanā S*, M 26.2 f/1:161 f) = SD 1.11 (2003). Nearby was a bathing place called Pubba,koṭṭhakā. It was near the Migara,māt’upāsāda, and as such stood on the east of Sāvathī. The Buddha used to bathe there (A 3:345). The bathing place was probably extensive since Pasenadi’s state elephant, Seta, also bathed there to the accompaniment of music.

<sup>47</sup> *Na khvāham ettha bhante bhagavato saddhāya gacchāmi*. In *Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta S* (S 41.8), the household-er Citta answers in these words by way of a pun (S 41.8/4:298-300) = SD 40.7. See Intro (5) above.

<sup>48</sup> That is, the set of 5 spiritual faculties.

<sup>49</sup> *Yesam hi tam bhante aññatam assa adiṭṭham aviditam asacchikataṃ aphusitam paññāya te tatha paresam saddhāya gacheyyūṃ*.

often developed, has the Deathless as its ground, the Deathless as its destination, the Deathless as its final goal.”

5 “Good, Sāriputta, good! Sāriputta, for whomever this is not known, not seen, not understood, not realized, not touched by wisdom—they would have to go by faith in others about this: that *the five spiritual faculties*, when cultivated and often developed, has the Deathless as its ground, the Deathless as its destination, the Deathless as its final goal.

But, Sāriputta, for whomever this is known, seen, understood, realized, touched by wisdom—they would have no uncertainty, no doubt, about this: that *the five spiritual faculties*, [222] when cultivated and often developed, has the Deathless as its ground, the Deathless as its destination, the Deathless as its final goal.”

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<sup>50</sup> “No uncertainty,” *nikkāṅkhā* = *ni* + *kaṅkhā*.

<sup>51</sup> “No doubt,” *nibbīkicchā* = *ni* + *vicikkicchā*.

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